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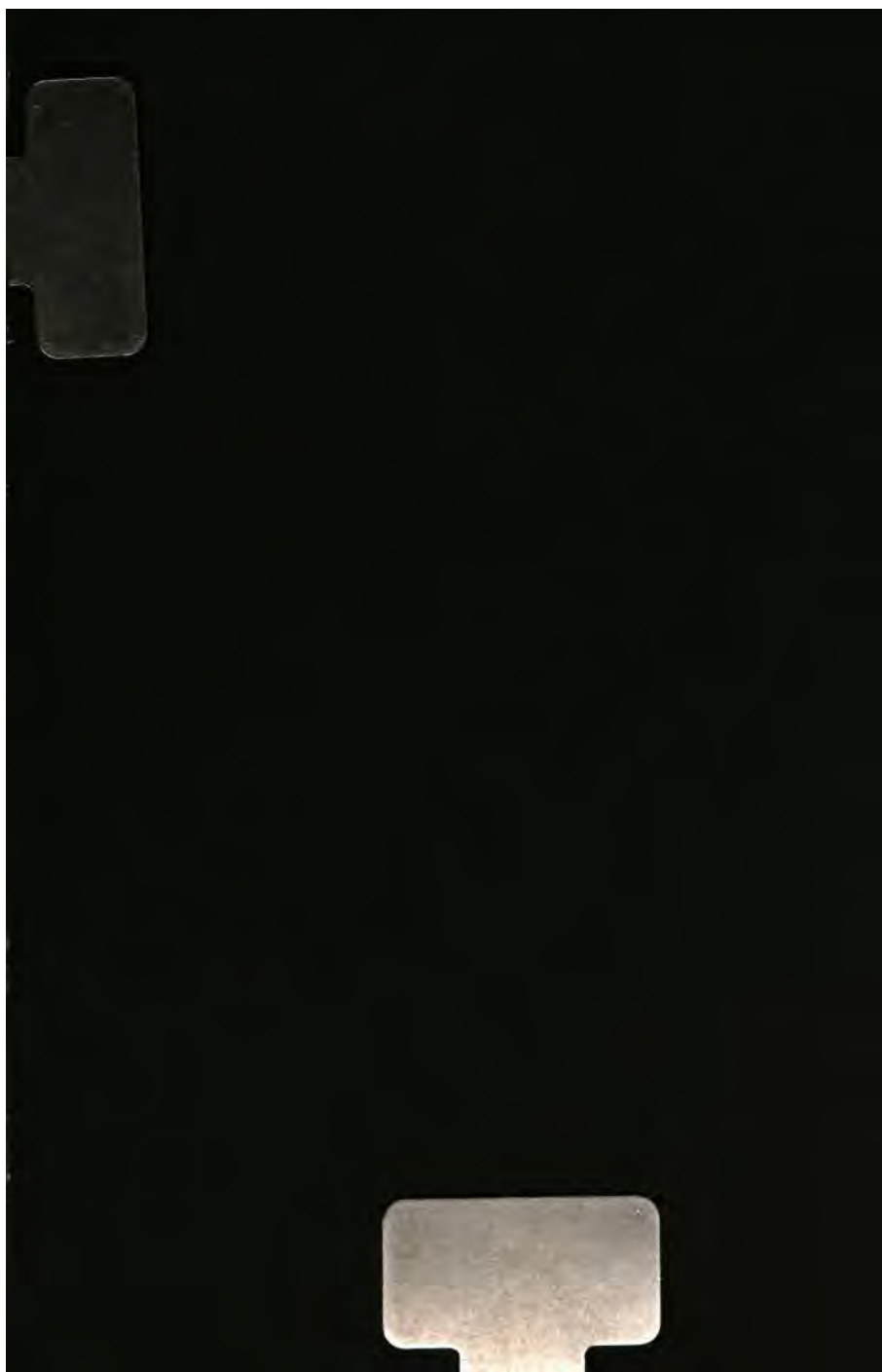
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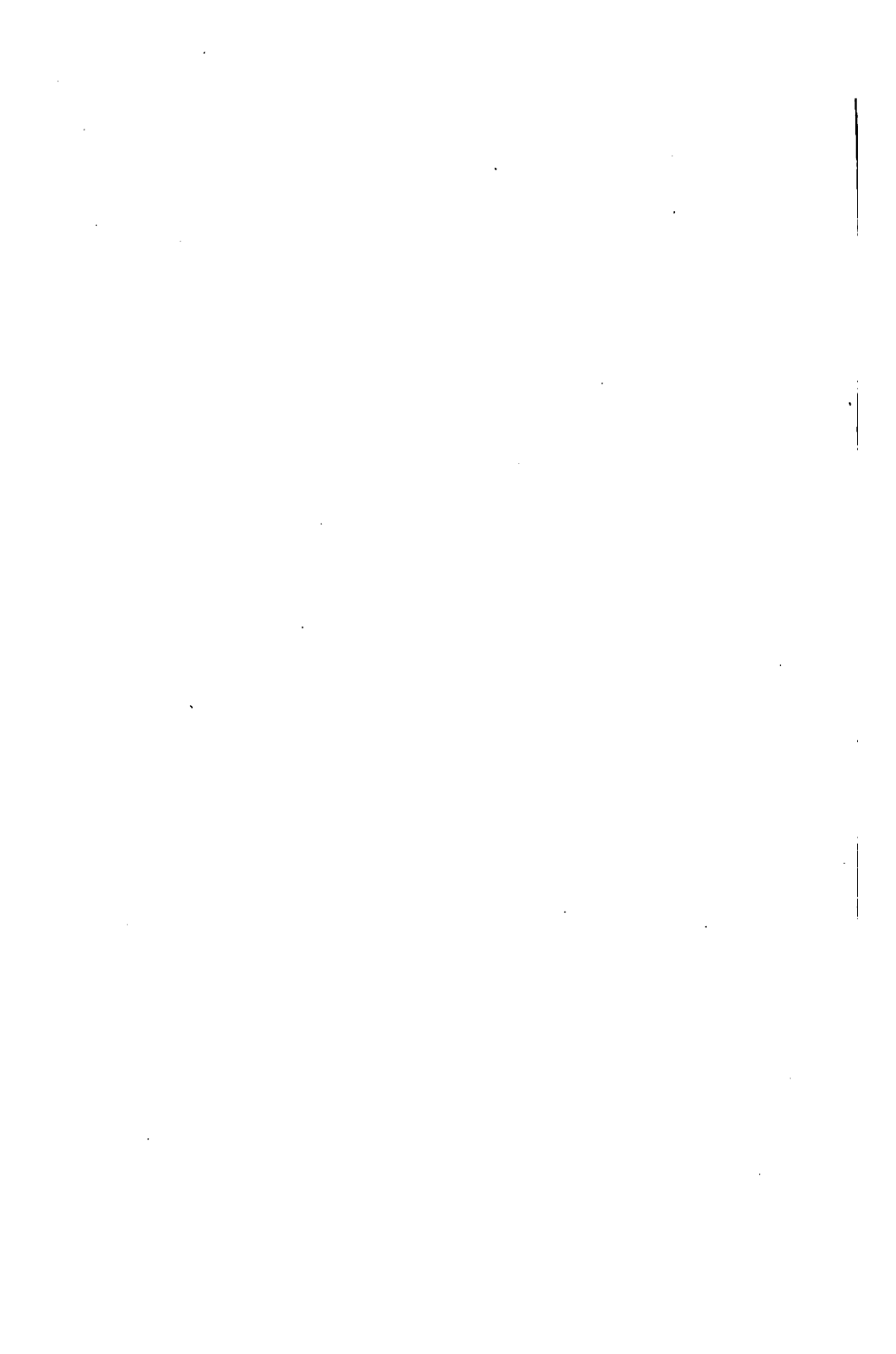
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THE HOME : IN ITS RELATION
TO MAN AND TO SOCIETY.



THE HOME:

*IN ITS RELATION TO MAN
AND TO SOCIETY.*

BY

JAMES BALDWIN BROWN, B.A.,

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I
DEDICATE
THIS BOOK
TO
MY GRANDCHILDREN,
IN THE HOPE THAT AS THEY GROW UP,
THE LIFE OF THE HOME
MAY EVER BE
A SACRED THING
IN THEIR
SIGHT.

J. B. B.

Streatham Hill, 1883.

PREFACE.

IN sending forth this new book on the subject of the home, it is needful that I should explain that it is by no means a reproduction of the work entitled "The Home Life in the Light of its Divine Idea," which I published some seventeen years ago. That book met with a very kind reception, and passed through several editions. But the subject is a large one, and rich in interest ; and it presents continually new aspects under the changing lights of the literature and the life of the times. The essential features remain always the same, but the theme is "ever fresh and ever new." The homes which are now being founded by those who were children when the "Home Life in the Light of its Divine Idea" was first

published, are surrounded by influences which cause grave anxiety to Christian parents, but about which we have no need to fall into despondency, far less despair. I have endeavoured in the present volume to adapt my argument to the new state of things which is establishing itself for the time among us, under the influence of a philosophy which we may fairly describe as "falsely so called," if we are to rate it according to its own claim as the system of the future. But it may have some valuable help to render to us if we regard it as a confused protest against much which has got itself associated with the Gospel, and which men find incredible in these modern days. If anything in this volume should be found helpful to young parents in their endeavour to make the home-life still the sacred and fruitful thing which it has been thus far during all the ages of Jewish and Christian history, my chief object in writing the book will be attained.

Society is in the main what its homes are. The sanctification of the home is, in the end,

the sanctification of the State. And this truth has during these last years continually impressed itself more firmly on mankind. Deeper research has but made it more evident that the roots of all the most sacred and powerful human institutions are to be found in the family ; while it is in the form of a home that the order of the heavenly life reveals itself in the Word of God. The home stands out in these days more clearly than ever as the typical human institution, the form of which repeats itself in all the progressive unfoldings of man's social and political life. Man as a social being, at his highest, is no solitary self-contained pattern of perfection ; but a member of a sacred household, bound by the closest ties to the great community to which God has related him, and finding his own personal good in sharing the good of the whole.

There are those who would persuade us that the significance of the family bond is wearing out, and who seek in some quite lower form the key to the relationships and experiences of life. And we may freely confess that those who

persist in taking the pessimist view of things,—“going on the things that are seen,” as St. Paul says—will find plenty to sustain them in the mere surface view of life which alone they care to contemplate. But we may calmly leave the sacredness of the human home to the care of Him who instituted it; persuaded that the present agnostic temper of philosophy is but a phase of human development which will “have its day and cease to be,” while the Word of the Lord, and that which is rooted in the Word of the Lord, abideth for ever. God will maintain the home, while He maintains man in the world, as His chosen instrument for the development of the life of human society.

This book is a further attempt to trace its influence in the sphere of man’s culture as a spiritual being, set to learn on earth how to take high part in the life of “the general Assembly and Church of the first-born” on high. My aim is to show how the home is the key to the life of man as a citizen of a yet wider world; and to trace the method by which,

in the counsel and purpose of God, this sin-tormented earth may be made homelike once more. The general form of the treatment of the subject follows, as in the former book, the lines which are laid down with no trembling hand in the Old and New Testament Scriptures. I have aimed at compression and directness, preferring to dwell on definite relations and experiences, and to develop principles which will have a wider bearing than is covered by the immediate matter in hand. Nor have I been unmindful of the light cast upon the subject by the speculations and conclusions of the various schools of thought which instruct, or distract, us in these recent days. Many are so wise that they teach us that the social order of the world might have been arranged on a much simpler plan than the home, in whose life the idea of sacrifice fills so large a space. But the one transcendent fact in human history is the sacrifice which was accomplished in Jerusalem, and we may rest securely in the conviction that God will never suffer the Divine significance of that

fact to die out of the world. In my treatment of the subject I have held the mystery of the Cross ever in view. To those who have never studied the lessons of Calvary, the life of the human home must be, for the most part, a veiled secret; while those who would master its deepest meanings, will find their most precious help in the picture which the New Testament presents of that Jewish home, in which God opened a fountain of life to a dying world.

Some of the discourses printed in this volume have already appeared in a fugitive form in periodicals, but all have been subjected to a careful revision. The book has a unity of its own, as my readers will see, and keeps close to the subject. The two discourses on "The Sacred sorrow of the Home," and "The Sacred burden of the Home," touch on deep experiences, by which homes, if they are saddened, are enriched and blessed. Those who can see the sacredness both of the pain and the strain, are those who will know most of the strength and the joy. With these few words of introduction,

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I send the volume forth ; and my earnest prayer is, that it may lend some little help to the parents and children of the younger generation. that, in spite of the menacing tendencies of the times, they may hold this sacred Home-Life sacred still.

J. BALDWIN BROWN.

1883.

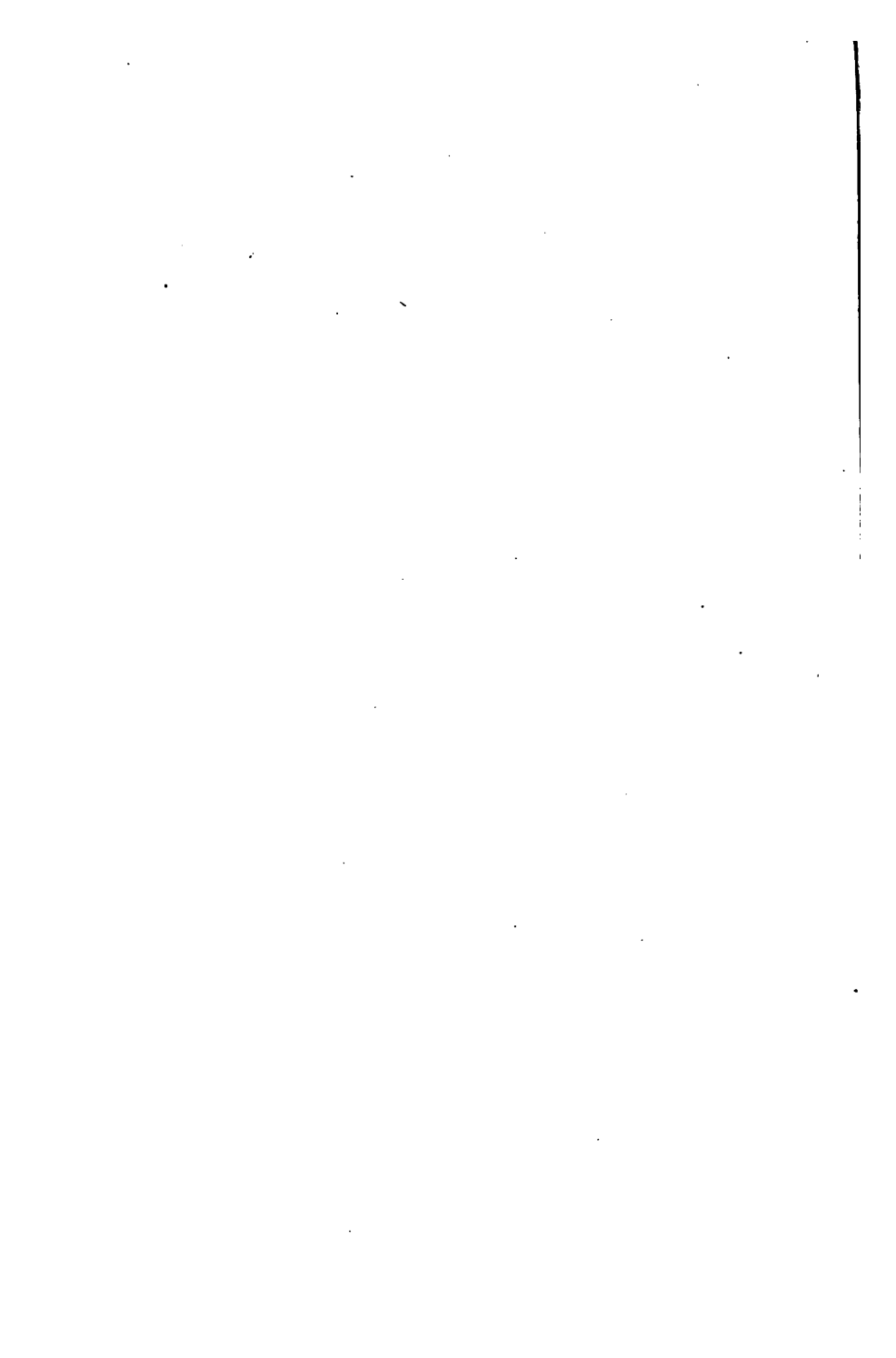
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I.

THE FOUNDATION OF THE HOME.



I.

THE FOUNDATION OF THE HOME.

“God is love.”—I JOHN iv. 8.

THIS is, perhaps, the deepest and most pregnant word ever spoken by human lips. “Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.” Now love is the fulfilling of the law; that is, the perfection of the life. And love lies at the root of the home; love is its noblest and most perfect form; that love which is the image on earth of the love which redeems and saves on high. Love, then, is the largest and divinest theme which poet or prophet can descant upon, and yet at the same time so much of the folly of the world, so much of its vice, gathers around this subject, as well as so much of its nobleness, that it does not end itself easily to the preacher’s hand. It

touches, on the one side, sorrows and burdens so profound, and, on the other, joys and hopes so glorious, that their very intensity lends to them that element of sacredness which makes profanation easy ; while it is mixed up with simpering follies and deadly vices which need delicate and discerning, as well as stern and searching, handling, if the root of them is to be laid bare and destroyed. I am happy that my themè, the Christian home, leads me into that spiritual region in which the deeper and nobler elements of the passion escape profanation on the one hand, and from which the follies and the vices with which it is so fearfully disfigured may most effectually be rebuked and put to shame on the other.

There is a passage in the New Testament which seems to me to contain the marrow of God's truth on infinitely the most important relations and experiences of mankind—Ephesians v. 22—33. The conjugal relation—that which builds up homes, and peoples not earth only but the heavenly kingdom—presents to us love in its most intense and developed form. The world has not words which lie so near to the deep heart of love as this passage from St.

Paul. They contain the Divine word, the mind of God, on this great matter; the greatest on the whole with which man has to do. And it stretches its interest beyond the human sphere. It is love which makes music through the whole created universe; it burns in the seraph who "loves most" on his throne, where glows the golden empyrean splendour; and it gleams in the dew-drop that flashes back the glad glance of dawn, from the cup of the leaflet in whose bosom it has nestled tenderly all night. Love is the band which binds the unity of the vast Creation; love is the thrilling inspiration of its life.

Our generation is less busy than former generations with the mere mechanism of Creation, but it is profoundly observant of the play of its life. We conceive of the universe of being as not so much made by the hand, as moulded and penetrated by the life of God. Goethe struck the right keynote when he put these words into the mouth of the Spirit of Nature:—

So at the roaring loom of Time I ply,
And weave for God the garment that thou seest Him by.

Those elaborate demonstrations of the Divine power and wisdom as displayed in the mere

mechanism of Creation which so pleased our fathers, somewhat weary their sons. The Bridgewater Treatises did a great work in their day, but they are out of tune with the best observation and thinking of ours. We have learnt that the universe is alive; and it is just the life of the Creation and its living expression which these grand demonstrations miss. It is as though a man should endeavour to establish the nature and function of limbs by the mere inspection of a dead subject on an anatomist's table, while one glance at the face, form, and motion of a living man would flash a flood of light—God's light—upon the whole. That which is most of God in the Creation is not the marvellous adjustment of the wheels and springs of the mechanism—though that *is* marvellous, and is less studied now, perhaps, than it deserves—but the intellect which shines out of its motions, the love which is expressed in the play of its life. Show me a broad landscape with the sunlight gilding its crests and flooding its plains, and the soft shadows sleeping in its hollows, and you show me more of what God meant to express to my intelligent, sympathetic spirit by the Creation than is disclosed by the

analyses of the whole Bridgewater school. And why? Because God is Life—the play of Life alone can reveal Him. The Life is the Light of men. God is Love. The silver cord that binds all living things, and conducts the floods of living fire, alone conveys and displays His energy, in whom all things live, and move, and have their being; from whom they spring, in whom they centre, to whom they tend, and on whom they rest.

I say that the conjugal relation presents to us love in its most intense and developed form. But love is one. Do not suppose that there is one love of a friend, another of a brother, another of a husband, another of God. The distance varies, that is all. Some are related in an inner sphere, some in an outer sphere, of the being. But the love is one. “Whoso loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?” The sun rules various planets in various spheres. On some his light blazes with passionate fierceness, in some it hardly melts the bands of icy captivity which is nature’s death. But the light is one, the law is one, the effect is one, according to its sphere. So the idea of love in its most

developed form—and you will find the principle of sex running through the whole Creation—is the key to its essential nature everywhere. The joys, the sorrows, the burdens, the duties, the aspirations, the hopes, which grow out of it in its most perfect form, rule everywhere through all its spheres.

“God created man in His own image; in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them.” “And God said it is not good for man to be alone; I will make him a help-meet for him.” It is not good for man, made in God’s image, to be alone, for God would not be alone. A lonely eternity of existence did not, could not, satisfy His heart. From eternity His Word had ranged forward to the Creation; from the first His joy had been in the habitable parts of the earth, and His delights with the sons of men. To dwell with beings like Himself, able to answer His intelligence, His will, His love, as a man answers to a man, able to think out His thoughts after Him, able to dwell with Him in a home and to make that home bright with the songs and the work of sons, was the eternal purpose of His mind and yearning of His heart. And man

was made in God's image, so the idea repeats itself in the human sphere. God's love from eternity was yearning for its objects. Till the sons were born the very life of God had not come forth in its fulness. Nay, when the sons were born something still was needed, an experience, a life, which should bring them into the inner sanctuary of His love. He loved the creature when His smile played as a benediction over the Creation; when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted aloud for joy. But the Adam of Eden did not satisfy his longings. The Adam of heaven had to be born, not the creature of His hand, but the child of His love.

The Lord God became the husband of the race which He had made in His image. He brought Himself into a new and more sacred relation than that of Creator, and out of that relation our new life as sons of God, the name, the rights, the hopes, the home of sons, all spring. "Thy Maker is thine husband," says the prophet. It is a strong image; you may think that we must be careful lest we press it too far; that it is but an image borrowed from our relations, to express in terms which man's

experience enables him to understand the depth and intensity of the love of God to human souls. It is the earthly image which is borrowed. Would you understand why God made man to love and to be loved, capable of relations which involve such heavy burdens and such exquisite joys, you must study it in the light of this prophetic idea. All the burden of human love, His love sustains; all the bliss of human love, His love experiences; all the duties of the human relations which spring out of love, His love explores. The aim of all the rich and vast experience of man, of which love is the parent, is to make him capable of loving God, and of receiving and containing all the joy of which the Divine love is the fountain in human hearts through eternity.

The relations which spring out of love are the highest expression of the universal law—Nothing liveth to itself or dieth to itself. Nothing in the universe seeks to live its life in isolation; always the principle of life is communion. The more fully a creature depends on other creatures for that which is needful to its development, the higher is the type of its life. The young of no creature

is so dependent on external ministries, in its first stage of existence, as the human infant. Because it is so highly organised, it is dependent on a care, a love, which the lower tribes of the Creation can dispense with. The creature as it rises in type rises in complexity, and needs the combination of many elements and influences to minister to the unfolding of its life. And this law, which runs through the whole Creation, finds its highest expression in human and Divine love. The duality of the human, the fact of sex, which, as we have said, is the key to the structure of Creation, is the fundamental feature of our nature. "Neither is the man without the woman, nor the woman without the man, in the Lord." God's idea of man is completely manifest in no individual of our race. A combination of individuals, having distinct qualities, attributes, and functions, alone presents it. In the man and the woman at the head of a home, there is, or ought to be, that oneness which makes them together one completer human being than either could be in isolation. And even then the oneness is incomplete till it comprehends dependent beings; and so the old Hindoo saying, "The triad, man, wife,

child, is the true man," has truth at its heart.

And here the question occurs as to the humanity of Christ. Was not that the complete humanity, the image which man should wear to the eye of God? Is not this implied in the words, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Let us read the description of Christ's humanity in the form of His humiliation, which is drawn by an inspired hand. "He shall grow up before him as a tender plant, as a root out of a dry ground; he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him." Is that the complete image of a man? Surely not. It is the complete picture of the Divine messenger in a world like this, so marred by sin. But the complete man is not, cannot be, one whose "visage was more marred than any man's, and His form more than the sons of men." Then let us trace Him up from the scene of His suffering to the throne, there surely, in the glorified Man Christ Jesus, the King on the central throne, the full human image will appear. But even there the Man Christ Jesus does not suffer us to conceive of Him as reigning com-

plete in glorious isolation. We read of "His body the Church, the fulness of Him which filleth all in all." The complete humanity is there—Christ in the Father's home, with His bride the Church, the children filling the air with their songs of praise. This is the eternal realisation of the idea of God, in which His love reflects itself and rests.

Love is that wherein man realises that His true bliss like God's is to be sought in communion. It is that which kills self, and makes the being look out of itself for its good. It abides on earth ; busy as the devil is, he has not killed it. It is the golden cord by which the life of man in its deepest degradation is held back by angel ministers from completing its communion with the fiends. Hell is where love is dead. Wretched they, unmanlike, brutelike, who have never found that which they love more than life ; to save which, to bless which, they would gladly die.

You find the witnesses to this reign of love in the lowest as well as in the highest regions of experience and life. Many an abandoned, brutal fellow has his darling, who loves him with passionate tenderness, and who, stained as she is with vice and crime, would die to save a

hair of his head from harm. In the haunts of profligacy, the lairs of squalor and misery, where the devil has blighted and blasted every fair feature which distinguishes man's lineaments from the brute's or the fiend's, love alone defies him. You will find there not seldom a tenderness of devotion, an utterness of self-sacrifice, a gentleness, a grace, a glory of love, which claims kindred with the elect angels, whose love is vocal before the burning throne. It is the deepest passion of many a heart that to every eye seems to be dead to it. It is the sacred romance of many a life whose aspect has been as prosaic as the stones of the Exchange, which its feet have daily trod. You have heard of the hard, stern man, whose life had been a daily grasping and gathering of gold, whose heart was supposed to be as hard as a nether-millstone to the touch of pity, and who laughed sentiment to scorn. He died, and no will could be found. There was a secret drawer in his bureau ; they broke it open in search of it, and they found there a bunch of faded flowers and a lock of a woman's hair. Love blasts as well as glorifies many a life. The two possibilities ever go hand in hand in such a world as this. The

Gospel has a double savour ; it is "life unto life, or death unto death," to souls. But the curse is not in the love, but in ourselves. Nothing springing out of love, however it may appear to blight and blast a life, can be a loss or a bane to a being who will take the sorrow and lay it before God. The heart that can love, that can learn sacrifice out of its love, and can cherish, after a godly fashion, its memory, though denied its joy, has that developed within it which will lend brightness and joy to eternity.

Love is the great expositor to us of a Divine idea—God's idea of life ; the idea which must lie at the root of all lives that are to sun themselves in the glory of His life—that to do good, to communicate, to give, to minister, is blessed. Is that Utopian ? Is that an idea of blessedness which you cannot in any wise take in ? There was one season, at any rate, I think, in your experience, when you literally lived in another's life ; when to make another glad was the only bliss you craved ; when the light of another's countenance shining upon you lit up yours with radiance ; when you felt for once, in your feeble measure, what God feels for all

the world. And is there not one relation, the deepest and the richest known to earth, the fountain out of which the holy parental relationship springs, in which your joy and delight are just in proportion to your power to impart, to minister, to bless. In a home it is precisely your power to make another glad which will light up your own face with joy. It is your power to bear another's burdens which will lift the load from your own heart. It is your power to foster with vigilant, self-denying care the development of another's life, which will sweep back a flood of joyous and stimulating energy into your own. The joy of love is the joy of reciprocation—of getting back, with rich addition, what you have unselfishly bestowed. Bestow nothing, receive nothing ; sow nothing, reap nothing ; bear no burden of others, be crushed under your own.

Oh ! that I might persuade you all to look at the deeper relations of life, and the duties which spring out of them, in the light of God which this passage from the Epistle to the Ephesians sheds forth. The joy and the glory of Christ are His Church, the Church which He died to save. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ ;

how that, though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we, through His poverty, might be made rich." And because He thus humbled and emptied Himself, "God hath highly exalted Him, and hath given Him a name which is above every name." By service, by sacrifice, by suffering, by patience, such as the universe knows not beside, He won this crowning glory. The first-born of honour is the first-born of sorrow, sacrifice, and death. Love, and the relations which spring out of it are the education of man for the fellowship of this Divine life. "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." The one spring of the blessedness of that life of love is sacrifice. Claim love and it escapes you. Win it by service, by devotion, by love, and it comes back like sunlight on the soul.

There is nothing in this universe which is so independent of mere will and purpose as love. No amount of elaborate scheming and planning will win it; no amount of iron resolution will command it. It never springs save by the altar of sacrifice; it is itself the sacrifice which the fire touches, transmutes, and blends with heaven. My friend, have you discovered the secret;

have you learnt the first lesson in this school? Passion is selfish; fancy is fickle; they go by the name of love till passion is burnt out and you see the ghastly ashes; or till fancy flits and shows the vacancy behind. You have not begun to love till you have begun to sacrifice, till you feel that your chief spring of joy is denial of self for another's good. As you realise that the true joy of life is in making the life of another blessed, you rise into sympathy with Him who lives to impart His blessedness to all the worlds. Love, like all things here, is but education. The love of a little circle, the love of one who is dearer than all the rest, is but the commencement of the culture. We are so constituted here that a little sphere absorbs all the light and glow of our love. But life should be the continual enlargement of the field of our interest and sympathy. The love of those dearest to us should teach us the lesson of love to mankind. It is the sphere of our deepest and richest education. Of all things love asks most from us, and yields most to us; and it has within its field both the cross and the crown.

But here, as elsewhere, men will have the crown without the cross, and end by missing it.

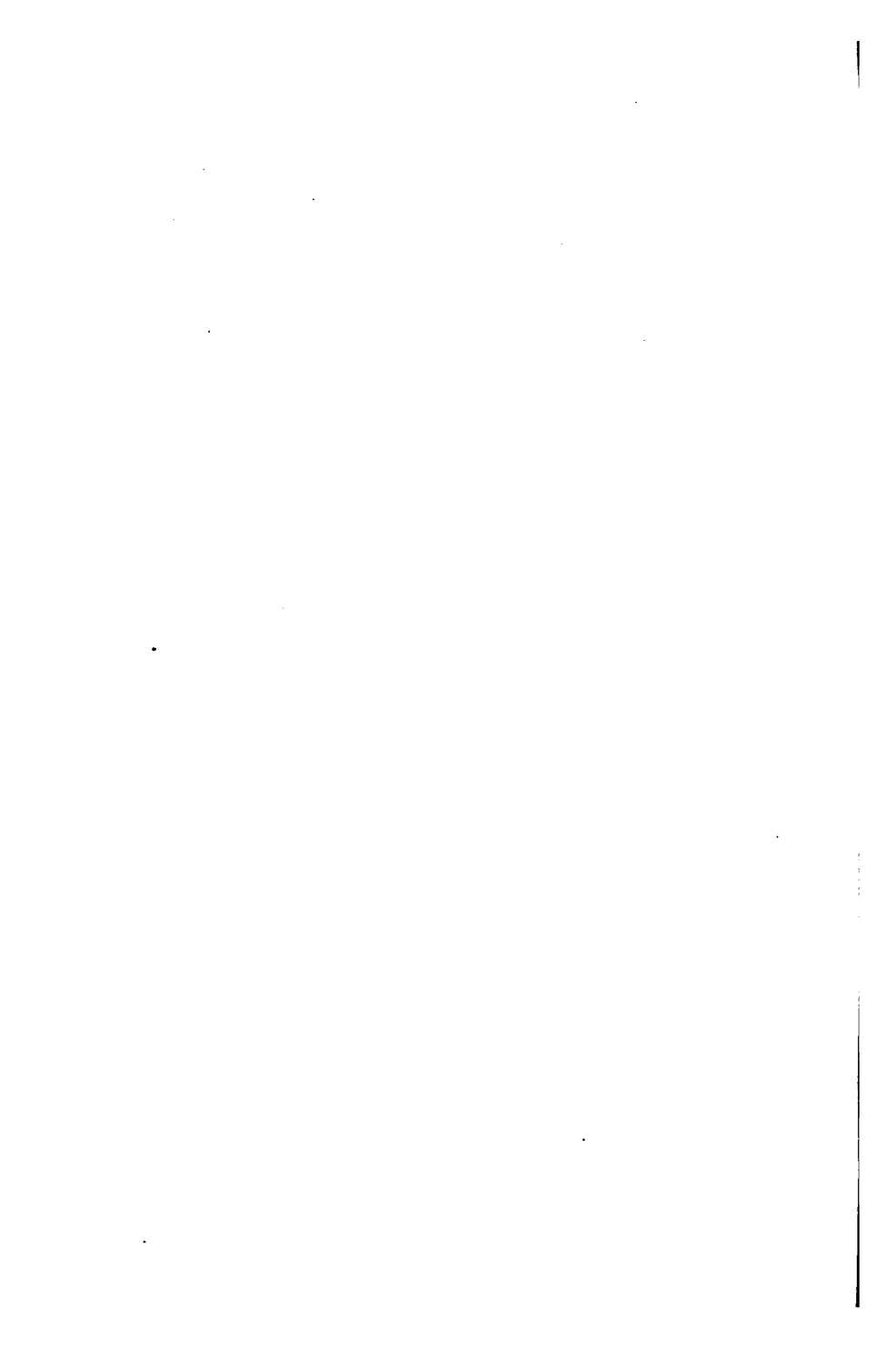
It is the deep secret of misery in homes ; men and women will clasp at the fruit without the culture, the strength without the patience, the joy without the burden, the crown without the cross, of love. They reckon that they have a right to so much service, care, and tenderness from those who love them, instead of asking how much service, care, and tenderness they can bestow. According as a man soweth, so also shall he reap in this seed-field. He that soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly. He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption ; while he that soweth to the spirit shall reap of the spirit, life. Like all strong things love may be a great curse to men, if men will have it so, as well as a boundless blessing. It makes the glory of heaven, and it is the purest fountain of joy on earth. But how many homes are there, how many hearts, in which it is making a discord and a misery such as can hardly be surpassed among the fiends in hell. Use it purely, use it nobly, and it will bestow upon you the purest bliss that is known to creatures ; be selfish about it, self-willed, passionate, or impure, and it will scourge you sooner or later with a lash such as is wielded by no

Fury which is let loose on the vices and follies of mankind.

Like all Divine things love has its fleshly counterfeit, which the devil is ever seeking to palm upon the soul. But just as the love which endures in a higher love expands, educates, and glorifies the being, so does lust contract, degrade, and destroy. There is nothing so deadly to the spirit, nothing which so enfeebles and emaciates both sense and soul, nothing which makes swifter and more utter wreck of the whole faculty of the being, than lust, the counterfeit of love. "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ" in your love, "and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." Keep your love pure, and school it to sacrifice, and all the bliss and all the glory of the Divine nature are within reach of your hand. But let it grow selfish and wanton, let it burn with the fever of passion, or feed on the garbage of lust, and there is no limit to the career of degradation which will open to you, but the deepest depth, the horror of horrors, of the pit.

II.

THE PLACE OF THE HOME IN THE ORDER OF SOCIETY.



II.

THE PLACE OF THE HOME IN THE ORDER OF SOCIETY.

"All the families of the earth."—GENESIS xii. 3.

ST. PAUL, as we have seen, finds the key to the constitution and the order of the human home in the spiritual sphere. Christian philosophy is inevitably transcendental; that is, it believes that earthly things are made after heavenly patterns; and that "the things seen and temporal" can only be fully understood by letting the light fall on them from "the things which are not seen and eternal." The dearest relationship known to earth can only be understood by those who look above the earth, and who find in the words, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it," the pattern of its most sacred duties, and the fountain of its purest and loftiest joys. It was the redemption of the home when

Christ's redeeming love to the world was made the pattern of its love. It had fallen into utter contempt and shame—how utter let Roman satirists and historians tell; Christ redeemed it by associating it with His life, and it began to be re-sanctified from that hour. "Father," as we have seen, is not a word which we borrow from earthly relations and experiences and employ to designate in terms familiar to us those which are heavenly. Heaven lent it to earth, and but resumes its own when it reveals the Father as the most sacred Divine name. It may be said that it is a comparatively late revelation; that men had advanced far in the path of development before they adopted "Father" as the name of God. But the thing was there in the Scripture before the name was uttered; in the earliest dawn of history—for it will be allowed on all hands that the third chapter of the Book of Genesis is a very ancient document indeed, verily a chapter out of the Book of Origins—words were spoken which implied all that "Father" expresses; and God is even then represented as placing Himself in a fatherly relation to the world. No doubt man, as his culture progresses, forms to himself con-

tinually higher and yet higher notions of home-life and its duties. A comparison of the home-life of England with that of the Australian bush would reveal a wondrous progress. And yet at the heart's core of both there is the same love. And before both, above both, there is the Divine original of that love set forth in the promises of the earliest chapters of the Book of God. And if you search out the root of that development, of which the Christian home is the fruit, you will find that it is self-control, self-denial, self-sacrifice. That home is the highest in which love reigns most perfectly; and the love which blesses homes is the love which "seeketh not her own," but is ever on the watch at the cost of self to minister to the husband's, the wife's, the brother's, the sister's, the children's, good.

"Yes," it may be said, and is said, by the teachers who now claim the monopoly of wisdom, "this is precisely what civilisation discovers and establishes; as men get developed as social beings, they come to understand that it is this unselfish, this self-denying, self-sacrificing passion, which is most richly charged with benediction to mankind." "Such love," said Mr. Cushman, in his address to the Pilgrim Fathers,

"is the maker and conserver of churches and commonwealths, and where this is not ruin comes on quickly." Now it is simple matter of necessity that experience, when it is sound and true, should lay bare the Divine order of life and duty. Men cannot but find out as they explore, that God is right. He has said that honesty is right before Him, and that men are bound to be honest because it is right. But they are sure to find out in time that it is the best policy too. So here men find out how good it is to live after the pattern which God has been showing to them all along. But it is essential to understand that He did show it, and that infinitely the strongest and noblest motive which man has to repeat it in his life is the love wherewith he has been loved of God. The thing was in heaven before it was on earth. From heaven this, too, descends. Study the picture which the Bible presented of *the* Father in *the* Home, and which was painted at a time when the home life of earth was far enough removed from likeness to the Divine idea. Very beautiful, too, is the Jewish home life which Revelation constituted and nurtured, and which was wonderfully saved from the degradation which is always

fretting and wasting all human things, by the hope with which it was charged, the hope which was cherished in Jewish households, concerning the Messiah whom they were one day to give to the world. It is very noteworthy, too, that that hope is still a living factor in the life of Jewish households, and is one of the main reasons, through the special care which it secures, of the reduction of the mortality of infants in Jewish families below that which prevails in the Christian families around them, to this day. All that is highest, most elevating, purifying, and saving in the life of the Christian home was in heaven before it was upon the earth, and men in living purely, nobly, unselfishly in the home circle are being drawn by love to live like God.

The revelation of the Father with which the Bible is charged is the revelation of One who so loved the world as to give Himself for it. "And hereby know we love, because He hath laid down His life for us." Homes are possible on earth with all the lofty, unselfish devotion which they demand, and which, blessed be God, they constantly display, because the great world is a home over which, though it is not always easy to trace it—the rule of the home must often seem

to the children needlessly stern—a Father rules in love, and makes that love a power to help, to bless, to save. All the higher elements of man's nature, and the noblest features of his social life, all on which the philosophers are now insisting as conservative of souls, of homes, and of States—the zeal, the enthusiasm of humanity, the self-sacrificing devotion to the good of all, by which civilised communities live and progress—are not copies of a heavenly pattern so much as flowers from a heavenly root; they are the bursting into bloom and fruit in the human sphere of that life of God, whose yearning love drew the well-beloved Son from the bosom of the Father to Gethsemane and Calvary, and which inscribes for ever round the crown of all power, splendour, and triumph, the legend of the cross—mighty to save.

Beware of the notion which is constantly insisted upon by a section of the philosophers who claim the monopoly of wisdom in our times, that because such an institution as the home unfolds under the influence of culture and civilisation higher and yet higher forms and larger powers of blessing, therefore it is the creature of civilisation, and is developed by cul-

ture out of some dull, base, bestial germ, having its origin and its affinities in the dust. It may be quite true as matter of history, within the region of our cognisance, that this growth, this development, of the home may be traced. But it is not a little noteworthy that the higher we trace the stream of history, the more important, the more sacred does the home appear. Scholars who have searched deeply into the "*origines*" of human institutions, come upon traces of the home in a fully developed form very early indeed in the primæval records of our race; and the ablest writers on these subjects are disposed to trace in the rule of a father in his household, the first rudiment of all our most complex and highly-developed machinery of society. But, be that as it may, it is not only most true, it is the dominant truth, that the home in its most highly-developed Christian form alone explains all the stages through which it has passed in its progress, and alone furnishes the key to all the toils, the burdens, and the cares which it imposes, wherever its experiences gladden or sadden a creature on earth or in any of the worlds. We must remember that it is the arch which makes the key-stone, and not the

key-stone the arch ; it is the form, the idea of the arch, which makes the key-stone the key.

And, as we have already hinted, the Scripture tells us that the idea of a perfect home was in heaven before it was on earth. It may be traced on earth in the history of heathen life and culture from very small and humble beginnings ; though even there, if we could go back far enough, there is ample reason to believe that we should find it charged with a great sacredness, even in the early twilight of history. But in the Bible there is noble witness to the sacredness of the home from the first. Man and wife are the first human figures which we meet with, and soon children, with all the deep, sad, yet blessed experiences of the human home. "He set the solitary in families" from the beginning. And what is the first Scriptural record of the development of our race, as we gather it from certainly one of the very oldest documents of human literature ? We read in Genesis iii. how the Father, who made man in His own image, came to him to play the Father's part in his shame and suffering, to undertake the burden of his guidance and discipline, and to work out his redemption at the cost of His own sacrifice

and pain. I care not what view you may adopt of the origin of this record. There it stands, in the early twilight of man's history, as a witness that this lofty idea of human relations, and of the sacred pain through which love fulfils its noblest ministries, and tastes its purest and most lasting joys, was cherished and set forth by men who believed that God was revealing it to them ; and that belief is mightily sustained and confirmed by what God has suffered, as well as wrought, as the great Father of the great home, through all the ages of human history.

In truth, these great human institutions have heavenly originals. If you would understand them you must study them in God. They begin on earth, within the reach at least of our present scientific observation, in obscure and tentative forms, and they work up and on to a completeness which is still in the far distance yet. But they abide in their pure perfectness with Him who formed man in His image ; and who reveals the perfect pattern of all human experiences and relationships in His relation with the children whom He rules in His household, whom He is training by His discipline, and whom He will present faultless with

exceeding joy before His face at last, in the home which awaits the redeemed, the city which hath foundations, the new Jerusalem on high.

We live in a fallen world. Man fell; the home fell. All things of high power and promise have now on earth to start and to struggle up from low and poor beginnings. And lest we should think that it is all born from the dust and settles to the dust again, as they are trying to persuade us now, Revelation—blessed be its Author—tells us from what it fell, and to what it shall be restored.

And now, in the light of these principles, it is easy for us to understand why from the beginning "the solitary have been set in families" by the wise and merciful ordinance of the Lord.

The home is the instrument of a double education. Its function is to develop the Divine image in parent and in child.

"Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in

the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her ; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened."

Now I have not here to discuss the exact nature of the history which I have just read. Whether it is literal history, or an imaginative draping of spiritual facts, really does not matter for the purpose that I have in view. The Bible says that after this fashion sin entered into the world. Philosophy says that somehow after this fashion sin enters into every human heart. Always there is the appearance of good which is attractive. Man sins in pursuit of what seems to him to be good in some way. Either the fruit of the tree seems good for food or to be desired to make one wise. It satisfies some

longing, some appetite, which for the moment has possession of the being. But always there is the uneasy sense that the promise is delusive, that the good is unreal. There is the Divine commandment, written or unwritten, against it—a commandment, the whole meaning and sanction of which the transgressor is unable to explore. This is the history of the genesis of sin in every child who is born to sin and to suffer in a home. There is a good, the satisfaction of a want or a desire, which fascinates the imagination and captivates the will. There is the command against it, a command, the real bearing and sanction of which the child can very imperfectly understand. But he understands the authority which enjoins it. He knows that it is the command of superior wisdom, he knows that duty calls him to obey. Then arises the conflict, terminated as in Eve's case by yielding to the tempter, and placing the soul under the bondage of sin. But the parent will never deal with the transgression effectually so as to cure it at the root, unless he recognises the delusive appearance of a good that was presented to the eye of the young heir of freedom, and through the eye enslaved the soul. Hence

the sentence on the man was disciplinary, while on the tempter it was penal. We know little about the devil and the devilish. But we may believe that the difference between infernal and human sin lies here. The devils love evil for its own sake ; know the good and hate it, and seek to destroy it ; man loves it for the sake of some good which he hopes it will bring him, some increase in the possessions, or advance in the development, of his being, which he madly thinks it may be made to yield. Therefore, the sentence on the tempter was utter and final degradation ; while on man it was literally a sentence to a reformatory school. In sorrow, toil, and tears he was to learn how the devil had cheated him, in the hope that when he had learned that lesson his heart might be open to the instruction of God once more.

And be it noted, the devil's promise or assurance was, in a measure, fulfilled. God recognised the fact of the development, " Behold the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil." Man had gained a step in the development of his being. A larger experience, an experience which related him more closely to God, was now within his reach. But only by God's

gracious aid, by God's grace and mercy as Redeemer, in which relation all the fulness of the Godhead would be brought forth, could this daring act of presumptuous rebellion be overruled for blessing. In itself, but for God's redeeming grace, it tended to separate man from God, and to doom him ultimately to death. But by grace it was made the instrument of a Divine culture of man's nature, which would, in the end, transform it from the image of the earthly to the image of the heavenly, from the likeness of the creature to the likeness of the Creator, from the form of the first Adam, "who is of the earth earthy," to the form of the second Adam, "who is the Lord from heaven."

This was the counsel, the purpose of the great Father when He saw how the first home in Eden had been despoiled and broken up by sin. And as the first step to its fulfilment He set "the solitary in families," He laid the foundation of the home as the fundamental human institution, the basis of all true order, the germ of all true development, in human society. Out of the home State and Church were to grow; by the home they were both to be established.

And so God took the dual head of the first human home, the father and mother, and made them as gods to their children ; and He set them there to study the pain and the burden of godhead as well as the power and the joy. The care of the home, in which he was as a god to his children, taught Adam some deep lessons about the care of the great Father's home, which was then, so to speak, a great burden on the heart of God. The parents, when they saw discord, misery, and death in their own home, had a key to the understanding of the wrong they had wrought in the Father's house, and to the sorrow whose cup was then presented to Divine lips. I say the cup was then presented : the Lord from that hour began to lift and to bear the burden of the world. I think that the first grand idea of the institution of the home is here. It was the way by which man could gain the knowledge which is fundamental to all intellectual and spiritual progress—the knowledge of the mind and the heart of God.

III.

THE DISCIPLINE OF THE HOME

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“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it.”—EPHESIANS v. 25.

IT is a high commandment, but it is not a hard one, to love. Those who have loved with a true, deep, unselfish affection know something of the most sacred experience of the Lord. There was a father once who sobbed over his rebellious, traitorous darling lying dead in his sin and shame, “O my son Absolom! my son, my son Absolom! would God I had died for thee, O Absolom, my son, my son!” This may meet the eye of those who have uttered the same moan out of a breaking heart over their prodigals; but of none, let us hope, who do not love some being better than life. So the mystery of Calvary is not altogether unfathomable, to those who look into the mystery of life. Close by us, in our homes, in our hearts, we shall find

something that explains it, and make us understand the Divine necessity which dictated the most Godlike act of God.

I have said that the home is the most sacred sphere of the Divine education of our spirits, an education the method and aim of which we will endeavour to explore. And, first, we may certainly say that it is ordained for the continual purifying and perfecting of that love which "seeketh not her own," and which, of all the human powers and passions, is most largely charged with benediction to mankind. The philosophers have got hold of it and baptized it altruism, a barbarous, uncomely word, and a miserable substitute, in the shape of a philosophic conception, for living, breathing, palpitating love. But call it what you will, it is by this love which seeketh not her own, that all human societies, be they homes, or tribes, or realms, or empires, are blessed. Where this is present the society is edified; it grows in strength, dignity, beauty, and happiness; and where this is absent ruin comes on quickly. The coldest philosophic eye may note how vitally important to the good of communities is this power of looking out of oneself; this drawing of the soul to unselfish

activities and ministries, whereby the needy are to be helped and saved. For the chronic difficulty of all societies is their weak and helpless ; those who save them, most effectually save the State. The self-devotion may take the form of the martyrdom of the three hundred at Thermopylæ, or of Curtius at the forum, or it may minister with Bishop Belsunce in plague-stricken Marseilles, or with the sister of mercy, whose life is spent among the squalid homes of the poorest of the poor. It may dwell among the heathen, like Brainerd in America, or Livingstone in Africa, or Paul in Rome, or, highest instance of all, it may give itself for men like Christ on Calvary—the Divine type which all pure, unselfish devotion to humanity more or less perfectly repeats. But by these things men live. Thus they learn to live that life which is not as the brute's, but as the angel's, nay is as the life of God upon the earth ; and by this they grow to god-like form and power, and are trained for the work and for the joy of God's home in eternity.

Measure the worth of this to human societies. Consider that if a man turns in upon himself and lives the brute-like life, he does not simply degrade himself, he destroys himself, he dies of it.

A society of human brutes cannot long exist, it tears itself in pieces and perishes. Consider this, and then estimate the worth of an institution which is continually drawing forth and exercising to its full range of power the unselfishness, the gentleness, the tenderness, of love. The love in which the home is founded is, as we have seen, a love which makes another's good, another's gladness, the supreme object. The lover, if he is worth anything, does not talk idly when he says that he holds the beloved dearer than life. Toil is nothing, pain is nothing, sacrifice is nothing, if he may see the light of joy in those loving eyes, and hear the murmur of a tender word on the dearest lips. And it runs through the whole scale. All love, if it is worthy of the name, whatever be the form of the relationship, is in the same key. It takes pleasure in effort, toil, and even pain, if the beloved one may be blessed. There is not one love of the husband, another of the father, another of the brother, another of the child, another of the friend. Love is one in essence, and the key to it is one — the Love which redeemed the world by the sacrifice of its life.

There is a weary mother, worn by watching,

racked by pain ; but she always has a tender glance, a bright smile, a loving word for the infant who lies sobbing and gasping by her pillow, and whose life she would give her own to save. There is a young girl left an orphan, with a young brother of noble promise in charge. She cuts herself off deliberately from all the pursuits and pleasures which make life so bright to the young, and devotes herself to constant and severe toil, that she may send him to the University and maintain him there ; and there is a joy surging in her heart, weary as it is, and flushing her faded cheek, when he comes forth with honours, and promises to pass to the front rank in life, such as Dives could never know, could he roll in gold. And friendship ! It was a friend's love of a friend which was "very wonderful, passing the love of women !" "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Love, you see, is one in every sphere. It delights in ministering ; its life is sacrifice ; its bliss is to see another blest. Husbands, wives, brothers, sisters, parents, children, lovers, friends, see that ye love each other "as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it ;" and then it will be yours

to wear the crown, and taste the bliss of which such love will be the overflowing spring, through eternity.

And I care not where you may meet with it. If it is real it is all of this texture. The Saviour found it pure and abundant in a poor harlot's heart. The woman who wept on the Saviour's feet, had spent her all on the costly ointment whose fragrance floated like incense through the rich Pharisee's halls. Love knows no stint, no regret, when it can lavish itself on its object. You find it sometimes, as I have said, a precious pearl amid a festering mass of corruption—and all pearls, science tells us, are the costly burial of pains. Among the lowest, the most wretched, the most abandoned, this heavenly angel lingers. Pure and noble loves are not rare among those whom the world thrusts into its outer darkness; and by this tie God maintains his hold upon them there, and keeps open, little possible as it may seem to us, some channels of intercourse between them and heaven. Ah! if heaven abandoned its reprobates as easily as earth abandons them, alas! for the world; alas! for ourselves! None are quite lost while they have some being or beings for whom they would

joyfully suffer. We little dream of what God sees of the redeeming power of love.

Now, again I say, measure what this is worth to society. Estimate the healing, comforting, purifying, elevating influence which is ever flowing forth from this fountain, and you will understand the sacred ministry of the home to the higher culture of mankind. It is a mighty restraint of the selfish passions. It is the centrifugal force which continually widens the orbit of life, and bears us into the light of distant suns. In the home, if a man will love after a selfish, gross, and brutal fashion, he arms the Furies with a scourge which they will dye deep in his best heart's blood ; while every unselfish endeavour to lift and to bear the burdens of the dear ones around, fills the very atmosphere with the music of light and joy.

There is a sphere continually around man in which he must sow freely if he would reap joyfully ; in which he must give largely if he would receive bountifully ; in which he must serve patiently if he would be tended lovingly ; and in which he must bear bravely the burdens of others if he would move lightly under the pressure of his own. Unspeakably wonderful

and beautiful are the ways of God in having bound man by such tender cords to such blessed ministries ; in having established on earth an institution which constantly and mightily draws forth and strains to their full tension those unselfish affections, sympathies, and passions by which human communities are helped, blessed, and saved.

And the home in a still larger sense is the great educator of man as a moral being. Beyond all other experiences with which his life is brought into contact, it unveils to him the moral mystery ; and is incomparably the most precious and powerful instrument of his spiritual culture and development.

When Eve cried, "I have gotten a man from the Lord," she was in the way of understanding as nothing else would enable her to understand, the meaning of her own life and its relations to Him whom she then fully knew as the Father of her spirit. She saw then, as she had never seen before, the place in the Father's house from which she had fallen by transgression, and she understood then the meaning of the stern discipline by which she was to be restored. Whatever value we may be disposed to attach to this

narrative as history—and wide differences of opinion on this point are fairly allowable—at any rate, it is invaluable as a key to the deeper mysteries of man's life. When the first mother laid the blood-flecked form of the first murdered man on her sobbing bosom, and kissed the death-sweat from his brow, she had a terrible revelation of what God meant by sin. She saw *that* upon her breast which was an apocalypse of what sin involved, of what sin must work, of the utter misery in which sin must fruit, such as words could never unveil. And this is but the first germ, or if you will the type, of an experience which is the staple of written and unwritten history. How much of human experience is made up in all ages of the bitter misery which sin and selfishness work in homes, of the life which they wear and waste, of the beauty and promise which they destroy. And what else is the key to the tragedy of human history? It is Abel's murder repeated on the scale of the world. And God has made for each one of us, close round us, a little world which repeats for us in relation to ourselves the relations of the great world to Him. The home is the microcosm of which the great world is the

macrocosm. There is a world in miniature close by us where we can see the passions and the forces working, which make joy or sadness, which fruit in bane or blessing, in the wide world of human life. Men see there the tempers, the passions, the vices working mischief and misery to those who are dearest to them, which stir in their own hearts, and threaten shipwreck to their own lives.

And love has marvellous motive power ; to be mated only by hate, which is mostly its inverted form. The most bitter hates are often poisoned or exhausted loves. He is a poor parent who has never said to himself, I must restrain and master my temper, I must curb this fierce passion, I must deny this imperious lust, or my children will suffer. When a drunkard has got over the dread of his wife and his children seeing him in the form of a beast—though more beastlike than the very brutes—he has broken down one of the very strongest barriers which God has reared round him, to hold him back from deadly, damning sin. Who has never wrestled with his passions and tried hard to master them, that he might help those who are dear to him as life in their spiritual struggle, and

it may be, save their lives from going down wrecked into the pit ? We see the danger clearly enough when those whom we love are threatened by it. I once had a long and deeply-interesting talk with, I think, the most bitter infidel I ever met. He was proof against every argument ; but I found he had a little girl, whom he evidently tenderly loved. I asked him plainly whether he wished her to grow up to a life as joyless and hopeless as that which he was content to drag on, and he dared not say that he did. And I think it was mainly due to the measure in which that touched his heart, that he promised me to go home and read for himself once more, with an honest desire to see whether it made for his moral health or his moral degradation, the Gospel according to St. John. When we see the motions of sin stirring in our children, no stroke seems to us too sharp to chastise them, no hand is too heavy to crush the noxious passion before it grows to fell dimensions, and laughs the sternest chastisement to scorn. Heaven is saying to us, " Physician, heal thyself." Yes ; strike hard, strike home. Purge thine own heart of the evil, the cure of thy child's sin, perchance, is there.

And the influence of the home in restraining human passion and selfishness, in giving to men and women a noble and powerful motive to strive against sin in themselves that they may conquer it in their children, has in all ages, in all lands, been incalculable. The real strength, nobleness, and permanence of human communities depend largely on the honour in which the home-life is held, and the power which it wields among them. As you trace back up the stream to the beginnings of human societies, you find the home a strong and fruitful institution among all the peoples who have wrought most powerfully on the structure of society. I except the Greeks ; they did little for the structure of society ; for its culture much. It was the German capacity for a noble home-life, the sacredness and the purity of the German home, as far back as we can trace the history of Teutonic peoples, which made the German race so peculiarly susceptible of the highest influences of Christianity. So that to Hegel the Christian and the German era are identical. It is the homes of England—"Home, sweet Home," is almost our national melody—which, beyond any other of the benign influences which Providence

has brought to bear upon us, make us the freest, the most prosperous, and the happiest people in the world. Homes are poor enough in love and honour in all ages, and sad enough ; too often Marahs instead of Elims in the waste of life. But had God never in His merciful plan "set the solitary in families," the wells of life's desert had all been Marah ; and generation after generation in frenzied despair had flung themselves down with curses to perish in the sand. And love makes the difference between the Elim and the Marah. It is the love in the homes of earth that gladdens and blesses the pilgrims ; it is the wells and the palms of these Elims of love, which are not far to seek, that rest and refresh the weary wayfarers, and give them strength to hold on their way. They shall drink of this brook by the way, and, therefore, "shall they lift up the head."

There is another very important aspect of the home as the instrument of the highest education of all who compose it, and most especially the dual head of it, at which it is worth our while for a moment to look. It is the school in which God educates men and women by a great trust—the greatest which even He can repose in a

being whom He regards as not His creature, but His child. And trust is redeeming to all but the most abandoned men. When a man's heart has lost the power of responding to a generous trust, it is nigh unto the second and utter death. We may learn a deep lesson from our Lord's charge to Peter, as recorded in the twenty-first chapter of the Gospel according to St. John. "Feed My lambs," He said to the man who had most basely denied Him ; and thrice the commission was repeated, which Peter, grieved for the moment, would well understand when he thought of it calmly, and remembered his triple denial of his Lord. And that great trust restored him ; it made him the man whom we see at Pentecost and in Cæsarea, and placed him among the foremost in human history. And it is by a great trust that God is seeking to restore His sons. There is something quite awful, when you come to measure it, in the trust which God reposes in us, when He sets us in homes in which we are able to make so much joy or sorrow in other lives ; lives, be it remembered, which are lived in His great home, and in which His interest as the God and Father of us all is supreme. Above all, it should touch the deepest

and tenderest chords of our nature, when He puts His nurslings into our arms, to make according to our training of them the sweetness or bitterness of our own lives. Next to the voice that sobbed out the witness to the Father's love on Calvary, I think that the fullest proof that He loves us with cherishing tenderness, is that He trusts to us His infants, sends to us His young immortals, that we may train them for Himself. "Feed My lambs," He said to Peter. It was the greatest trust which He could repose in him. "Feed My lambs," in each generation He is saying to us, the parents in the homes in which He has set us, to study the great lessons of life, and to prepare for the great work of eternity.

And so precious does this purpose seem, this purpose of trust, that all the bitter woe which childhood endures at the hands of the base and brutal—and none of us can sum up that account—does not turn Him from His sacred method. Still He trusts, still He hopes that the homes of earth will people heaven with sons. In the great chain of influences with which our life is bound, and which draw us forward and prepare us for heaven, there is none comparable with the plea of love in the sacred circle of the home,

beseeking husband, wife, brother, sister, parent, child, to love as God loves, and to minister as He ministers, by pure, tender, unselfish devotion to those whom He has made dependent on their efforts, in their little measure, as they are dependent on Him.

It is out of the mouth of babes and sucklings, and not out of ours, that God sends forth His most weighty and powerful words. If man will not hear them, what hope is there! A bad father, a bad mother, not from ignorance or carelessness, but bad at heart, is beyond all teaching. Such have before them God's own lesson, the mute appeal which He, who knows man's heart and all its chords, has ordained to touch them. If they will not be touched, if they are deaf to the voice of their little ones, neither would they believe though one arose from the dead.

And then in a larger sphere the home is the culture of man for life and eternity. Man learns his lessons and practises his art and power in the little world of the home, before he goes forth to the great battle and meets his equals in the field. It is now thoroughly understood, as I have already pointed out, that all social and

political institutions grow out of the patriarchal. The most recent and able researches into the early history of our race, into the first starting of the germs of civilisation, have revealed in a continually clearer and clearer light the importance of the home. It is the parent of all political states ; and a sense of its sacredness seems to have been about the most powerful factor in the social life of the earliest children of our race, with whose history we can in any measure acquaint ourselves. It is in the home that man's training began, it is by the home that it is carried on and completed. The home, from which it started, is the form of organisation to which society tends to return. The redeemed world will be the family of Christ, of which the Church is the rudiment here. It is the one family in heaven and on earth, and it is destined to be visibly one in one home at last.

And a true and noble home-life calls out all the powers and qualities which the world needs for its work and its progress. The good learner, as a rule, is the good workman ; the good son is the good citizen ; the young champion of weakness in the nursery or in the playground, will one day stretch his shield benignly over a wider

world. What the Levant, a small, sunny, land-locked sea, girdled by shores of radiant beauty and rich fertility, was to the infant enterprise of our race, wooing the timid sailors forth, and training the courage, the skill, and the gallant, adventurous spirit which would one day breast the billows of the great ocean and overrun the world ; *that* the home circle is to the young sailors on the sea of life. It draws forth, under soft and sweet constraints, the manliest powers and the gentlest graces, all the strength and beauty of the nature, all that makes minds keen, hearts glad, souls strong, hands resolute and victorious. And if with them baser, fiercer, and more brutal passions spring, the home teaches men the secret of taming them, in the little sacred circle in which love inspires the effort and blesses the success. All the action of the drama of life gets rehearsed before a little loving company. Under the eye of parents and brethren it is not so hard to confess error, to suffer failure, and to retrace false steps ; while we draw from them a sympathy, a fresh inspiration, and a resolution that knows no rest until it has won the battle and grasped the prize.

The home is meant for all this, and for more,

infinitely more, than I can understand. But certainly for this God means it. And the question which I must press upon you is, For what do you mean it? What make you of this instrument of incomparable power and compass for cherishing nobleness, rebuking selfishness, crushing baseness ; in short, for taming the brute in the man and unveiling the god. Search and look, brethren. Look into your own homes ; God meant them to be the genial seed-field of all graces, beauties, and virtues ; have *you* made them the hot-bed of passions, vices, diseases, and miseries that reek of the foulness and rottenness of the pit? Wonderful is the Divine patience ; most wonderful, perhaps, in this ; the way in which it bears through the ages with the homes which are the nests of vice, the schools of crime, the teeming fountains of the pain and wretchedness which overflow the earth, for the sake of the glorious power of blessing with which that institution is charged, which He will yet make His chosen organ to purify, gladden, and save, this sad, sinful, struggling, but splendidly wealthy and capable world.

For the home of earth is the key to the life of the great home of God ; it opens the way for man's

thought and sympathy into all the deepest experiences, thoughts, purposes, and hopes of God. Heaven is the home which is ruled, gladdened, and blest by love ; the love which has looked into the mystery of sacrifice, and has learned in blessing to seek its bliss. In the centre of its spheres, in the midst of its elders, saints, and seraphim, in the heart of the blinding splendour of the great high throne, the head of all dominion and power, stands the "Lamb as it had been slain." He bears still the marks of the Passion, and is exalted to the throne that He may make the Cross, and all the love of which it is the symbol, the sceptre of power, the fountain of blessing, in all the worlds. Husbands, wives, brothers, sisters, parents, children, lovers, friends, all ye who love, love only in the Lord. Love as Christ loved ; help as Christ helped ; bless as Christ blessed ; and thus win for ever the freedom of the worlds where love bathes all things once more in beauty, and floods all things once more with bliss.

IV.

THE CHILDREN OF THE HOME.

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“ These little ones.”—MATT. xviii. 6.

“NEVERTHELESS,” said the Saviour, in a moment of profound sadness, “ when the Son of Man cometh shall He find faith on the earth.” Was He forecasting, think you, through the ages the constant failure of His Church to enter into His mind, to catch His spirit, and to fulfil His idea in the education and salvation of mankind ? Look on Christian England after eighteen centuries of Christian teaching and influence ; see what a world the Church has still round it sinning and suffering, and you will understand the sadness of the Saviour’s words. The Church has failed miserably at every point save one—it has never abandoned its purpose, its endeavour, its hope for mankind. It has blundered utterly about its methods. It has taken the world, and sometimes the devil, into

its counsels ; it has relied with sad and strange persistence on its carnal weapons to fight the battles of the Lord ; it has forsaken the spring of its divine power, the love that heals, and helps, and saves ; it has used brute force in every possible shape to dominate men's consciences, and to sway hearts to the fear of that Master to whom twelve legions of angels could bring no help which He cared to summon to His side, and who relies absolutely on the love that "endured the Cross and despised the shame" to subdue the world unto Himself.

But yet through all the ages the Church has been faithful to its purpose ; it has striven honestly and earnestly, according to its light, to help and bless mankind. Saddened by its constant failure, it has as constantly reviewed and reformed its methods. Lapsing again and again into worldly and selfish ways, it has again and again struggled out and up to a higher, nobler, more Christ-like life. It has had in it in all ages the inspiration of lofty purpose and effort, and it has thus, through all its worldly, faithless forsakings of the Master's spirit and methods, a perpetual spring of renewing, a spring which can never fail it. And this is, perhaps, the most manifest sign

of its heavenly birth, and will make it still, as the ages roll on, the power of God to the salvation of the great human world. And in no region of its activity and influence has its failure been so dire as in that of Christian education, the training of children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." The Christian home is, as we have seen, an instrument of incomparable power for drawing forth and parading in their full form and force, all those ministering qualities and energies by which in all ages society is blessed and saved. But it has a further, deeper, and larger power. It can touch the life of society at the very spring, and renew it. "Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not," said Christ, "for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Had the Church understood the words of the Master, and in that mind undertaken the training of "these little ones," we should not now be sighing and crying for the signs of the kingdom of heaven among men.

The power of Christian nurture in a Christian home is simply incalculable. There is nothing to be mentioned in the same breath with it in the whole field of Christian activity and influence. Read the account of what can be done

with a great troop of outcast children at an institution like that at Mettray. See how a man of Christ-like spirit, with Christian wisdom, patience, and sternness when needed, can master the homage and the love of these human outcasts ; can raise honour and loyalty to a passion ; can train young children nursed in vice and wretchedness to hate idleness, trickery, and lies ; can call out and parade all their goodliest faculties in their daily industries and in their intercourse with him and with each other ; sending forth each year a goodly band of workmen—brave, temperate, industrious, truthful, and pious—to till those sunny fields of Touraine, and to renew, were there but enough of them, the life of French industry at the springs. I say, estimate what one such institution can do in the Christian training of outcasts—and, thank God ! there are hundreds of them in Europe—and then measure what the Church has missed, has lost for Christ and heaven, in having suffered Christian homes to remain, age after age, so bare of sanctity, and the Christian culture of children to continue so empty of the spirit of Christian wisdom and Christian love.

The root of the mischief—the fundamental

cause of the failure of the Church to make the Gospel the power which God intended it to be in the spiritual education of mankind—is to be found, I believe, in a radical misconception of the function of the Church. It has sought to rule in His name; it was set to witness to His truth. God has been systematically presented to the mind of Christendom, and, of course, to the youth of Christendom in its homes, as the Ruler, the Lawgiver, the Judge, rather than as the Father; and the Church has been more prompt to wield authority than to minister and save. It is not too much to say that the chief trust of Christendom has been in law, as a power superior to love, in rebuking and destroying that sin from which man must be saved, or perish. "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us," seems to moan through the Christian ages, the wail of man's still longing, unsatisfied heart. The longing is there, and the cry; but where is the response? That word of the Lord which constituted Christendom—"He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father," seems for ages to have died down in the creed and the life of the Christian Church.

Christendom has heard of a stern imperial

despot in heaven, doing according to His own will, and utterly careless whether that will seems tyrannous to His helpless creatures—and it has trembled. It has heard, too, of a self-sufficing, self-enfolded Lord of the Creation, bent on His own glory as His end, and getting His tribute in every case out of the creature, alike by the bliss of the elect in the inner splendour, and the anguish of the reprobate in the outer gloom—and it has shuddered. Christendom has, alas! heard also through these ages of a great huckster in the chancery of the universe, who weighs systematically gifts to his temples or to his priests against flagrant transgressions, who winks at sin, if the gift is ample, and winks hard if the gift is lavish—and it has scoffed. The gospel of the priest it has learnt to hate with a fury which finds vent only in the mad and cruel excesses of revolution. All this Christendom has heard about God, and it is restless, refusing to be comforted, still.

But the Father! When has Christendom heard of the Father, and been satisfied, since the priest rose up between man's soul and God? The Father, to whom the sin of the child is the supreme sorrow; to whom the chastisement of

the sin is the saddest but most sacred duty ; in whose sight the salvation of the child from sin is an end which justifies the sharpest, sternest discipline ; whose heart yearns over the child in all the terrible experience through which sin inevitably leads him, with a tenderness only measured by the intensity of the anguish to which it seeks to minister, and whose joy, whose glory, is to heal, to comfort, and to save. When has that Father been confessed in the Creeds, proclaimed by the Churches, and set forth in the homes of Christendom, winning by the spell of His mighty love, a sinful world to righteousness and peace ?

And whence the failure ? Why has the Church so constantly proclaimed the despot, the tyrant, the huckster, instead of the Father, to the world ? I think that the root of the mischief lies in the sacerdotal incubus which has crushed the higher life out of the Church almost since apostolic days. Christianity is absolutely anti-sacerdotal. Christ and the priest are at the opposite poles. The Gospel constitutes every believer a king and a priest unto God, set to catch the key-note of the intercession of the great High Priest before the throne. Judaism,

with all its elaborate sacrificial institutions, was absolutely anti-sacerdotal. God constituted that people, in the early dawn of their history, "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation ;" and He sent His prophets to stir them to understand their vocation and fulfil it. But Christendom has been intensely sacerdotal since the close of the apostolic era; and the priest tends continually to fall back on terror, he wields it as his main instrument of sway over the ignorant and the reckless. God only, and the men who are inwardly taught of God, believe that the purifying, renewing, recreative force in the universe is Love.

It seems wonderful that a religion so intensely anti-sacerdotal in its character as Christianity, a religion which proclaims that God is a Spirit, and that they who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth, should have developed the most terribly despotic form of priestly tyranny which is known to history. The system of the Mediæval Church is the fruit of man's fearful and faithless effort to work out in his own way and by his own strength a Divine idea. It is man's form of a kingdom of heaven. Nothing can be a greater mistake than to suppose that the sacerdotal system of the Mediæval Church was

the fruit of a deliberate attempt to grasp and to wield for the ends of a selfish tyranny those powers of the world to come, which Christianity brought to bear on the heart and the conscience of mankind. There was much of this in it, no doubt, in all ages ; but we shall quite misread history if we fail to understand that all the great institutions which have played a leading part in ministering to the development of mankind, have had an honest purpose in them, on the whole, which has been the mainspring of their power. Men have meant, on the whole, to do right by them, but they have blundered miserably ; the aim, however, has, in the main, been right, and that has been the secret of their strength, and has enabled them age after age to endure. Grand conspiracies of men or classes explain nothing which is great in history. Deliberate, conscious self-seeking dissolves and destroys everything human ; in other words, man cannot long live on the lowest plane of his being ; he must rise, progress, or perish.

The sacerdotal constitution and influence of the Church, is not then a systematic conspiracy maintained through ages against the spiritual freedom and progress of mankind. It is rather

to be regarded as man's narrow, selfish, and faithless way of working out the idea of the kingdom of God. But none the less has it been profoundly disastrous ; and but that the Gospel has the spring of its power in the unchanging love of God, it would have killed its influence at the heart. But Christianity lives on, it stirs and works under the incubus ; it scatters blessing with its bound and crippled hands, and holds out glorious promise for the future, because in God are all its deeper springs. The main reliance of the priest is, as I have said, on terror. To frighten men out of sin has been the chief aim of the sacerdotal Gospel—as may be seen in the miserable parody of it which they are reviving now. Through all the ages of Christian history the roaring of the furnace and the clanking of the chains, have filled a large space among the influences by which the Church has sought to extend the kingdom of heaven among men.

And thus the whole key of Christian thought concerning man in his relations to God has been degraded. Man, out of the visible pale of the Church, has been represented as by birth a rebel and an outcast, the object, from the first dawnings of his higher consciousness, of the stern

condemnation of an inexorable Judge. Little children, unless the water of baptism had been sprinkled upon their brow, have been regarded and treated as more like the spawn of the devil than the seed of God ; the love which yearned to redeem the rebels at the cost of Gethsemane and Calvary, has been in every possible way maligned, and obscured ; and, as far as the doctors of a hard theology could compass it, has been held back from its saving, sanctifying work. And this idea has given the key-note to Christian education. Children have been taught from the first not to trust and hope, but to tremble and cower. They have learnt as the first lesson in the Christian school that they were sinners, and that they were bound to regard themselves as by nature outcasts. In all the schools of Christendom they have been suffered to grow up in slavish fear of the Father, that fear which "hath torment" and degrades ; while the Father prays them as the very first sentence of His Gospel to believe that, however terrible His sternness against sin, He loves them so tenderly, so yearningly, as to give what is dear to Him as life that they might be saved.

And here Calvinism and Sacerdotalism have

sounded the same key-note, and exercised the same malign influence on the youth of Christendom, by the idea of God and of man's natural relation to God, which they have presented to young hearts. They have differed about almost everything else, but they have agreed in this, bearing false witness for God to mankind. They have forced prematurely on young, sensitive, trembling natures, a sense of hopeless discord with the whole system of things into which, by no act or choice of their own, they are born; they have made the unseen, unknown spiritual world a realm of terror; they have presented life in the aspect of a dreary, weary passage through a dark wilderness, in which the best and wisest with difficulty fight their way through; and God they have painted as a stern exactor, from whose hand it will be matter of desperate difficulty to be saved. Busy as the devil is in the world, there is no region in which he has wrought with such paralysing influence on the essential virtue of the Gospel as in the sphere of Christian education; the result would have been not only disastrous, but fatal, if much of the deadly influence of narrow and debasing doctrine, had not been all unconsciously counter-

acted by the genial, quickening, kindling energy of the lives of Christian men.

But here I am most anxious not to be misunderstood. I am not complaining that either priest or preacher make too much of the sense of sin. I am not pleading that children may be allowed to grow up under easy moral conditions, and may be taught not to torment themselves about transgression as the moral consciousness develops, or that they may be nursed on the sugared Gospel of the philosopher—all will come right somehow at last. On the contrary, I believe very firmly that all the deeper and more pregnant interests of man's being gather around his moral responsibility as a free agent, his relation as a spirit to the Father of spirits, whose law he transgresses, whose heart he wounds, and whose home he forsakes and spurns. Far from lightening the sense of transgression, I would earnestly strive to deepen it. I believe that the main reason why this age is spiritually so sad and poor is because it tries to make light of sin, and to go dancing and singing on its way. Reconciliation is the profoundest necessity of man's nature; and the sense of sin must be fully developed that the reconciliation may be

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real, radical, and complete. One of the main-springs of the power which the Gospel wields over the heart and conscience of mankind, is the fidelity and earnestness with which it convinces of sin. I am not complaining of either Sacerdotalist or Calvinist that they are too anxious to convince men "of sin, and righteousness, and judgment." It is entirely a question of the quality of the conviction which is at issue between us ; and it is just the character and quality of the conviction which is the fundamental matter in the training of children in "the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

We all know the immense difference which it makes in dealing with a troublesome, fractious child, whether the remonstrance begins sternly or tenderly ; whether the child is made to feel that he has transgressed a commandment, and must be dealt with legally as a criminal, or that he has wounded the heart and disappointed the hope of a parent, and must be punished still, but sadly and sorrowfully, as a son. In the one case the nature is up in arms against the chastisement, which simply hardens, embitters, and destroys. This is why our gaols are nurseries of crime, and men come out of them to

run with new eagerness the downward course. Law has a hard hand, and irritates and inflames. We have yet to try upon our criminals the healing, purifying influence not of a gaol chaplain's sermon, but of Christian love. Thank God we have that force in reserve still. There was a soldier in an Indian regiment who was the despair of his commander, who had tried every form of punishment on him in vain. Brought before the regimental court martial for some fresh offence, the president said to him, "I am really in despair about you ; I have tried every means to reclaim you, but it is of no use." An old sergeant touched his cap and said, "I beg your pardon, sir, there is one thing which has not been tried—forgiveness." The commander thought a minute, and then turning to the criminal said, "I will try it ; you are free." The man was quite broken down. He began a new course from that hour, and became the model man of the regiment. So with the child. Treat him as a son, and there is something developed in his nature to lay hold of and to work upon ; something which lays it open to those higher influences which heal, sanctify, and save. I would have you in your Christian culture of

your children begin first with what God puts first; the mighty love which endured the cross and despised the shame, that it might lure back its sons to its heart. God is Love. That must come first in all Christian teaching about God. Breathe round these little ones in their earliest years the atmosphere of the compassion, the tenderness, the helpfulness, of which Calvary is the expression. Let them feel from the first that they are born into a world which has a loving welcome for them, a world whose Lord longs to cherish and to bless them, and whose power, whose thought, and whose hope are all ranged on their side. Let them know from the beginning the infinite tenderness which claims them as redeemed—the children for whom the Master died, and whom He lives to save.

Let them know that they are Christ's from the first breath, the first thought, the first working of their freedom; and that Christ cares for nothing so much as that they may be delivered from the sin that is corrupting and destroying them, and may be saved for God and heaven through eternity. Then, when the sense of sin develops itself—and there is no escape from the experience, for life brings home to every human

soul the truth of the picture of the inward conflict painted by St. Paul in Romans vii., and brings in some shape from every heart the cry, "O, miserable man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"—it is not lightened, it is made more bitter and burdensome by the knowledge of the mercy which it has repelled, the love which it has wounded, the grace which it has resisted, and the Father whom it has wronged and defied. Conviction, then, has something within the being to work upon and to work with, which draws the sinful child to the Being who can help, and heal, and save him. There is the memory of the Father's house following the prodigal into the wilderness, and wooing him even among the swine to tread with tears and prayers the backward path; and so a hold is established from the first on the young child of a sinful race, by which the Father draws him even in his most distant and reckless wanderings, and by which, far as he may roam, miserably as he may suffer, He will bring him in at last with the song, "It was meet that we should make merry and be glad, for this my son was dead, but he is alive again; he was lost, but he is found."

Never forget that the first, the fundamental principle of a Christian education is the surrounding the young spirit, in the very cradle of its higher life, with the witness that it is born into the Father's home, and that it has a right in all its struggles, its sufferings, and its sins, to claim the Father's pity, to cry for the Father's help, and to rest on the Father's will and power to save.

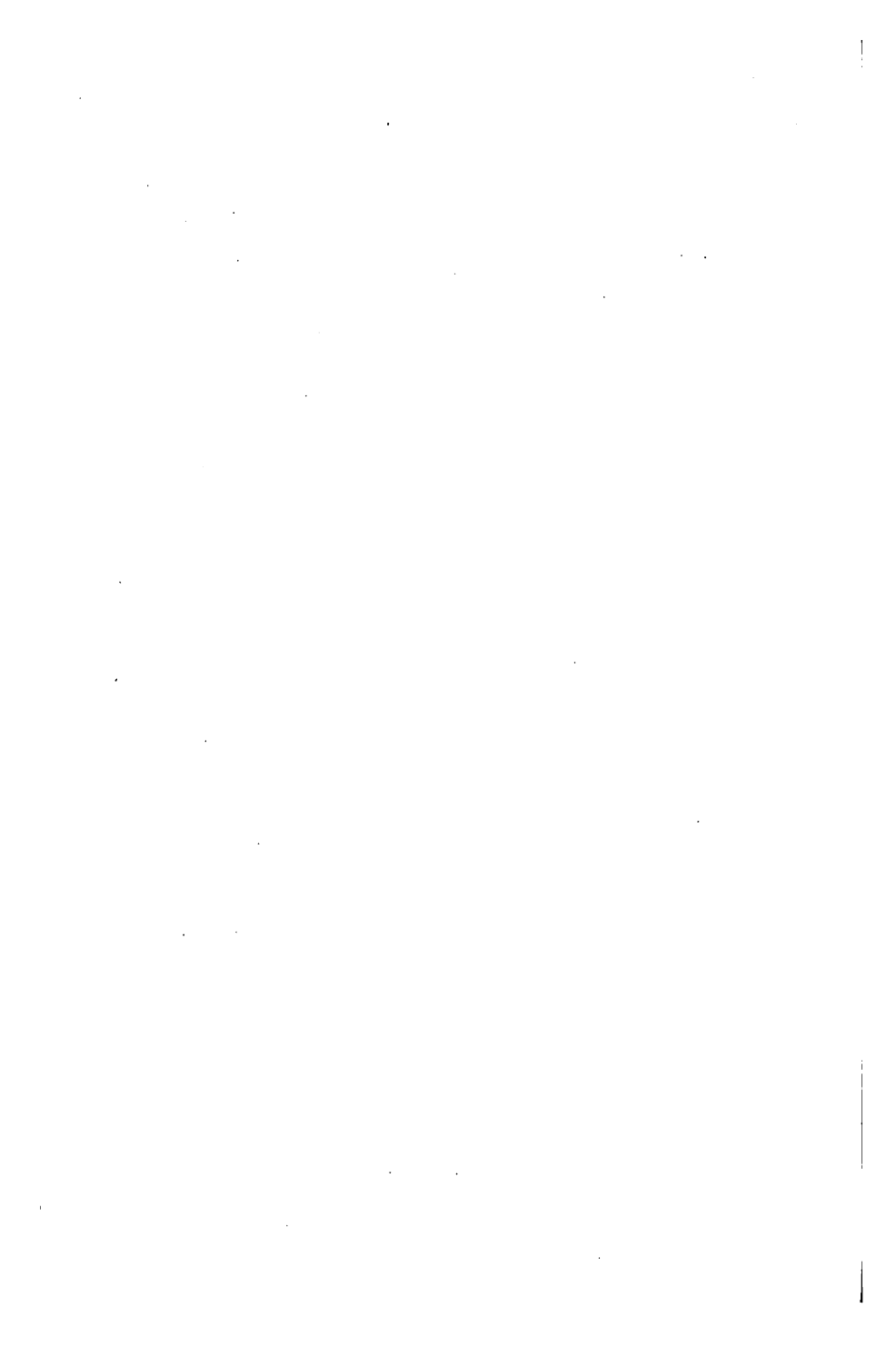
A second great principle of Christian culture, which the Church has failed to grasp and to wield as a power, is this. Christ bids us remember, and next to the revelation of the Father it is the great theme of His teaching, that men have to be trained here for the universe and eternity, and that the training must begin in the home if it is to bear any blessed and lasting fruit. The meaning of a man's life, is the next great lesson to the meaning of the word Father, and the wealth of the Divine love. "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth," said the Master. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God." How much of our Christian culture is built on the conception of a man's life, of its true dignity

and joy, which was before the Saviour's thought when He spake those words. The beginning of all true, noble, and fruitful life is the fair unfolding and culture of the faculties of the being in the sunlight of the Divine love. How much, alas ! of our education of our children, that is, of Christ's children—"of such is the kingdom of heaven"—in our homes and in our schools, has respect exclusively to the question, What kind of training will most largely and swiftly pay ? And our thought concerns not what it will pay the man as an immortal being, with eternity before him, to work out as the great plan of his existence ; but what will pay in the base earthly sense, the sense which Christ branded with His scorn, looking at the man as the creature of circumstance, living for the day, and dreaming that bread alone is the nourishment of his life.

God sends His infants forth into our homes with a rich endowment of faculty, faculty richly varied as well as rich in quality, distributing to each according to His good pleasure ; that is, according to a scheme of universal being too grand and far-reaching for us to measure. In this, too, we have a high part to play, by developing the faculty with which God has endowed

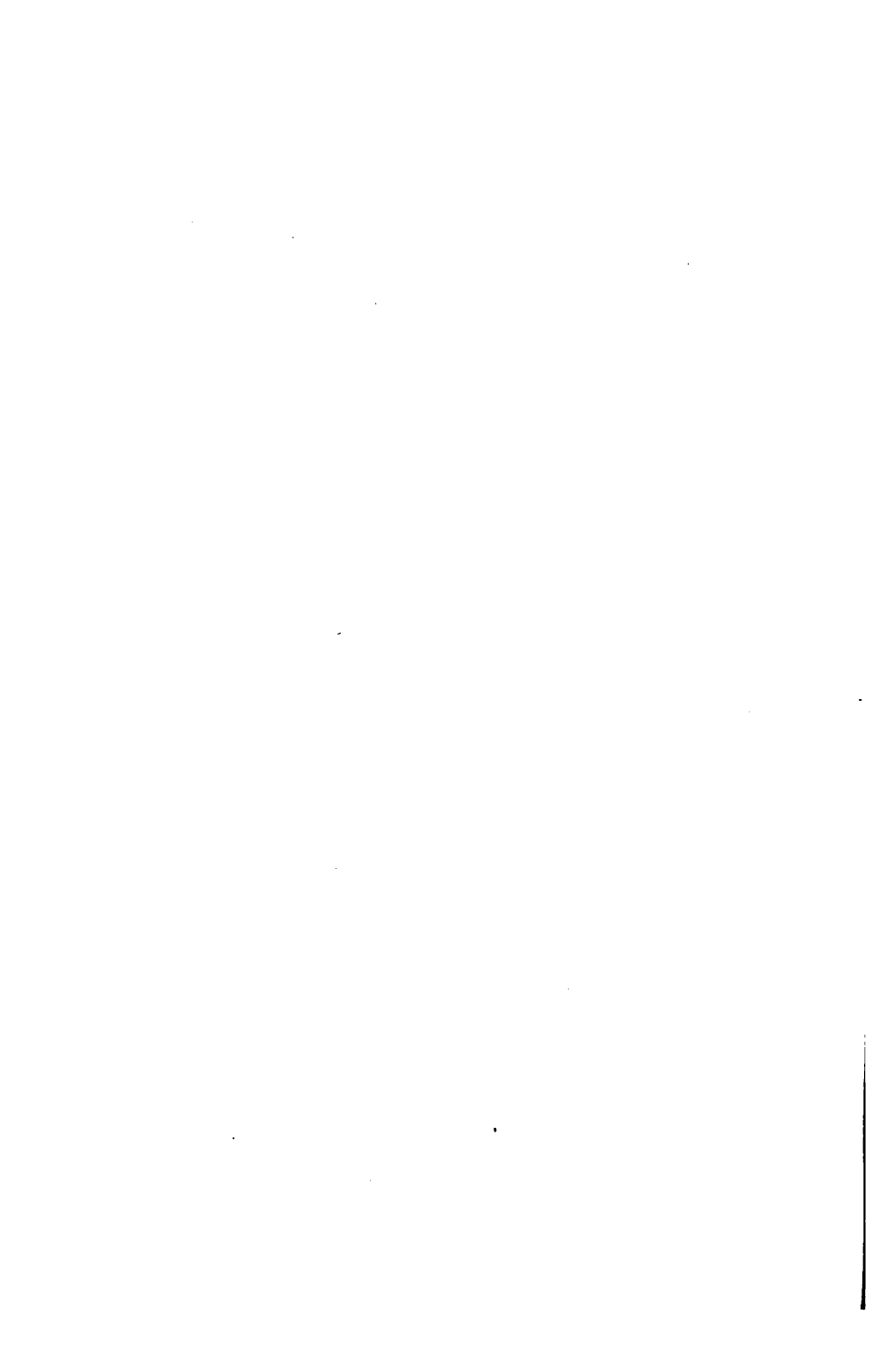
us to the utmost, and seeing that His little ones grow up in our homes large-hearted, noble, generous, unselfish, earnest, cultivated, and capable, servants of their generation according to the Divine will ; that is, according to the special faculties with which God has endowed them, and the special work which God has given them to do. Find out that special faculty and aptitude in your children, and strain your powers and resources to develop it, and to set them in life about their God-given work. Oh ! the misery which abounds on earth through the mismatching of faculty and vocation ; the yoking of lads and girls to a life-task that they hate, and holding them back from the work that they love. And at the root of nine-tenths of this lies, not a sad necessity, but a selfish, narrow, and worldly policy, which imagines that getting a living is what God must mean by life. Never forget that the free use and play of the faculties is the source of the noblest power and the purest joy in life ; the pelf which they can win is but as dust, as dirt in comparison ; while the range and the force of cultivated and developed faculty is the true wealth, the wealth which is worth reckoning in time and in eternity.

Train your children, then, from the first to take true measure of life, its grand possibilities, its glorious destinies. See that they have joy *in* their life-task, as well as profit *from* it. Let them sing to their tasks ; let the daily toil be a spring of pleasure. Lay up wealth in them in rich abundance ; send them forth full-armed and trained to work and to suffer, and to make their lives a blessing to their fellow-men. And then think often of the day when you will meet them, when life's brief stormy passage is over, with the boundless universe stretching out around them, and endless ages stretching on before them, through which they will gather with joy unspeakable the fruit of the seed which your hand first sowed in their young natures, as they enter with you for ever into the joy and glory of the Lord.



V.

*THE PRINCIPLES AND METHODS OF
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION.*



V.

THE PRINCIPLES AND METHODS OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION.

"And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath ; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."—EPHESIANS vi. 4.

OF all the great human institutions, the home felt first and most strongly the elevating and purifying influence of Christianity. It was there that the revival, the renewing, began which was destined to work outwards through all the intellectual, social, and political spheres, and create a new order in society. But we must remember that it did not create the home, even in the new and higher sense ; it simply quickened and restored it. It is significant that all the words which describe the powerfully transforming movements in society, such as revival, renewing, restoration, reformation, regeneration, point by their very structure to the past, as well as to the

present and the future. It is always "re," again, as if it was something which had fallen which was to be set up again, something lapsed which had to be restored. I do not think that this implies that every human institution was first planted upon earth in the ideally perfect form, from which it lapsed into the confusion and degradation of barbarism, and to which every reforming movement—we cannot get away from that "re"—aims at restoring it. But I do mean that the pure idea of the institution, its perfect form, was planted in heaven, and was a reality before the face of God, ere the first germs of it began the process of development here below. The perfect form of the family was before the eye of God, when He created man in dual form, male and female; and I have never, I confess, been able to understand how, on the theory that Evolution explains all the development of the Creation, the principle of sex first got itself established in our world. But it is very significant that the farther we read back in history, the more simple and pure seems to be the organisation and condition of society, and the more sacred does the institution of the home appear.

Christianity, as I have said, did not come to create the Home or the State ; it came to renew them. It found them fallen into confusion and degradation ; it came to set the true ideal in all its bright purity before men, and to infuse that quickening power by which the lapsed ideal might be restored. I say the home had fallen into degradation and ruin. But it is possible to speak too absolutely here. In Judea from the first the home had been established on what I might truly call the Christian basis ; that is, parent and child were related to each other on the basis of their common relation to a Father and Ruler on high. " The nurture and admonition of the Lord," as the Lord was then revealed, was the prime factor in the life of the Jewish household. And so profoundly influential is it still on the life of the Jewish people, that skilled Christian observers assure us that the reverence which is cherished in Jewish households for the mother and the child to this day, purely on religious grounds, is the chief cause of that vigorous vitality of the people which places them physically in the front rank among the peoples of the world.

The domestic life of the old German people

seems to stand nearest to the Jewish of all the heathen races, and is probably at the root of that profound relation which Hegel indicates and magnifies between the Teutonic race and the genius of Christianity. Among the classical races the home had fallen into miserable degradation and shame. There were vices cherished openly amongst them which ate like a canker into its heart. But even there, in Greece and in Rome, the wrecks of the home-life were noble and beautiful, and appealed to the ministry of the renewing and restoring hand. Attention has recently been directed to the Greek monumental sculpture, and the learned have been rather startled to find how much beautiful and tender domestic feeling is revealed in their tributes to the dead. While in Rome, the home from the first was of a very high and even sacred type, until the luxury and the profligacy of the dying Republic and the nascent Empire well-nigh destroyed it, at any rate among the upper ten thousand. The home in such a state of society as that to which Suetonius, Tacitus, and Juvenal hold up the glass, must have been simply hideous. But we must remember that these descriptions, which we blush to read, apply

after all to but a small, though the dominant, section of society. If all the peasant and the middle-class homes throughout the Empire had repeated the profligacy of the Roman palaces or the Neapolitan cities of pleasure, it would have called for fire from heaven and not a Gospel.

Always in a corrupt society there is a multitude of the middle and humbler class living after a simpler and purer fashion, and they save the State. It is so in Turkey at this moment. The poor provincial Turk as a rule lives quietly with his one wife, and is fairly honest and industrious. If life through the Turkish Empire had everywhere repeated the morals of the palace or the harem, the whole nation would simply have rotted to death. Always there is some precious wreck remaining in the worst society, which bears witness to a purer and nobler past; and this is the material out of which the reforming, restoring hand will build the yet nobler future. And so Christianity came, and comes still, not to create but to renew and to restore. All things earthly are images of things in the heavens. All the great human institutions trail some heavenly radiance with them, as they descend and establish themselves

in our world. The Creator and Ruler of things earthly is not one Being, and their Redeemer another. To that dark Manichæan heresy Christianity opposes the affirmation that He who created, redeems. He repairs the waste, rebuilds the wreck, and restores the form which was before His eye from the beginning—the marred and broken but still indelible lineaments of which are the strength and beauty of the institution in its fallen condition, as it struggles through the wrong, the vice, the misery, of this sin-deflowered world.

So we may be sure that there was much beautiful home-life still surviving in Rome and even in Greece when Christianity went forth on its mission to save. But it was dying and must have died, as the religious life of society decayed, and lust rioted at will. It was a dying world which the Gospel came to quicken; a world fading and failing visibly, for want of healthy life-blood at its heart. It was just that new power of life that Christ brought to men. There was one great radical want in the heathen home; a want which was the secret everywhere of its terrible proclivity to decay. The great thing needful for the salvation of

political society was a sense that there was a Lord above the earthly lords who played the god on its imperial throne; an Almighty King to whom ruler and subject alike owed allegiance, in obedience to whose law alone could ruler and subject be blest. And *that* the Christian faith supplied, and political society was saved. And the supreme need of the heathen home was the knowledge of the Father, of whom the earthly parents and their little ones were alike the children, to whom all the members of the home owed a supreme duty, and whose method of government in His great household, the world, was the model to which they were bound to conform their relations, duties, and activities in their own.

Christianity set the Lord before parent and child, master and servant, husband and wife, brother and sister, as the author of their relationship, the lawgiver of their duty, the rewarder of their right, the avenger of their wrong; as was seen in that picture of the first human home which is the earliest revelation of the Book of God. In Roman society the father in the home was as the Emperor in the State; the "præsens Jupiter"—the present god. And

the Roman "*patria potestas*" had its dark, sad side as well as its noble one. The father can only be trusted to rule as a God in his home, when God is his recognised ruler, and he thinks, speaks, and acts as a father under the eye and hand of God on high. It was the name of this unseen but ever-present Father which Christianity revealed ; filling the home with a sacred Divine presence, and laying on every member of the household a restraining and guiding hand. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord." "Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath." "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh." "And ye masters, do the same things unto them . . . knowing that ye yourselves have also a Master in heaven." It was such words as these, uttered in the home circle with a voice that bore the authority of heaven in its tones, which saved the heathen home from dissolution, reknit its bonds of relationship, consecrated its sympathies and affections, and purified and vitalised its love. To unfold the mystery of all this, to reveal its reality and apply its power, is that "nurture and admonition of the Lord," which is the salvation of the home-life every when and

every where ; some elements of which we will briefly endeavour to expound.

The first thing to consider is the basis of the culture, The Lord. To make a child understand fully what that means is the Alpha and Omega of Christian education. To train children of old in "the nurture and admonition of the Lord" was to teach them to comprehend the meaning and bearing of the great spiritual truths which the Gospel brought into the world. It is the same still. Let them know from the first that they are immortals—not according to the modern Pharisaic doctrine that the Christians are an aristocracy of immortals, among a great multitude, wearing equally the human form, who are but as the perishing brutes—but immortal by birth and by destiny. Let them know from the first that they have Eternity before them in which to work out the problem of their lives, and that every act of theirs, at every moment, has relation to infinite and eternal results. Teach them to balance the else overwhelming pressure of the moment, by the infinite future. Make them understand that sin is not part of the original constitution of their being ; that it is a bondage into which they have

fallen ; a tyrant's yoke which is crushing them down deeper than the dust.

Tell them that the Infinite Almighty Lord who made *them* and made the worlds, pities them tenderly in their bondage and wretchedness, and has made Himself their Redeemer, that He has made atonement for their guilt, and has claimed them as His brethren—His comrades in the great war of the universe, the war of righteousness and sin. Let them know that they are His children, tenderly loved, eagerly sought, wondrously prized, and dearer to Him than all the worlds ; that every sin is a wound to the heart of their loving Saviour, and an act of fealty to His deadly and hateful foe—that Evil One whose reign is a blight to all beauty, a palsy to all vigour, a bane to all joy, in all beings in all worlds that are within reach of the contagion that reeks from his accursed realm. Teach them that the Lord is their Captain in the great battle of their lives, the battle of all that is noble, pure and aspiring, all that is of God in their nature, against all that saddens, defiles and destroys ; a battle in which Christ is the leader, of which angels are the witnesses, while a heaven of glorious bliss is the prize. Teach

them this, and you send them forth nobly furnished for all the occasions and exigencies of this life ; soldiers full-armed and trained for such service here as the very angels might covet, and such honour there as no angel can win.

Contrast the Christian and heathen beliefs, the Christian and heathen character, the Christian hope and the heathen despair, and you will understand what it meant in those days to bring children up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." And it lies at the root of all Christian culture still ; not the doctrine of Christ only, but Christ Himself—Christ the Lord. The fundamental principles of the Christian education of the children in the home may surely be stated thus—"Christ is educating you, young soul ; nearer than the nearest earthly friend, dearer than the dearest, the Lord Christ is busy about your young life. He has it in charge. He watches lovingly all its stirrings and buddings, and bears patiently with all its wilful, fretful ways. He sorrows over every fault and fall ; He rejoices over every pure thought, noble impulse, and unselfish deed. His sympathy is with you in all the sorrows and pains of progress ; you will one day understand that they are growing

pains, though now they seem hard as fate, and bitter as death. Pray to Him as to no far-off, but as to a present, Saviour, with you, within you, at every moment. Beware of Him, provoke Him not, for He is with you, young pilgrim, to lead you in the way, and to bring you into the place which He has prepared."

Surely the noblest service incomparably which the Christian parent can render to the children in the home, is to make such thoughts familiar; to make Christ a real, near and friendly presence; no shape of terror, no stern inquisitor, but a gentle, tender, patient, sympathetic Friend and Helper; One who is against everything which saddens and degrades them, with everything which uplifts and ennobles them, and adds benediction to their lives; the Angel who will redeem them from all evil, and make their lives beautiful, blessed and glorious in the glorified Creation through eternity. And the one way of leading your children to Christ, Christian parents, is to live yourselves in constant fellowship with Him. They will go where you lead them; not where you send them, while you linger behind. Let them see that He is the Friend and Keeper of your spirit; that His

word is dear to you, His commandment right ; that His favour is your life, and His frown your death. Let them see that you count the unseen things the real ones, and that you reckon earthly troubles, through Him, the seeds of heavenly glories ; make it manifest that He is the true companion, counsellor, and forerunner of your pilgrimage, and then you will have won them as your fellow-pilgrims—one with you in the beliefs and resolutions which make a life-course noble and fruitful on earth, and heirs with you, joint heirs with Christ, of all that will grow out of life's tearful culture through Eternity.

The next question concerns the method of the culture, which is described in the significant term, "the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Some have supposed that in the double term there is a reference to the dual parentage, and that it describes the blending of the manly and womanly influence in the rule and culture of the home. But the original hardly looks that way. Our revised version has it, "nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord." So that the word "nurture" in the authorised version, in the original bears the sterner meaning ; and refers to the discipline which comes through

correction; while "admonition" suggests counsel, advice, reproof, exhortation, and all the intellectual and moral influences whereby a young soul may be trained for its work. It is wonderful how the fatherly and motherly influences blend in Christ; the tenderest nurture, the firmest correction, the sternest chastisement, in which no child can ever miss the love.

The key to the Divine discipline and correction of our spirits is to be found in this sentence of the prophet, "Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though Thou tookest vengeance of their inventions." Christ has no pity for the evil which is dragging us down to perdition. He makes us conscious of a merciless sternness in dealing with it, while He bathes our souls in the cherishing atmosphere of His love. We dare not confound ourselves with our sins, when He is visiting us with His discipline. We know that His aim is to separate us from our sins, to make us feel that they are no integral part of us, but foul parasites which are wreathing around us, and sucking our very life-blood away. And so while Christ brings His judgments to bear on the sinner, He bids the sinner look up and live. He slays, and saves by slaying. Wondrous

triumph of Divine mercy and grace! Model your methods with your children on His. Nurture, admonition; correction that uplifts while it humbles; admonition which expounds the discipline in the light of the profound and far-reaching purpose of love.

And that you may not mar all at the beginning, "Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath." That is, do not irritate them by unwise, unrighteous, or capricious rules or ways. There is no true nurture which is not built on justice; justice which your child can comprehend as well as you. There is no mischief that you can do comparable with that which arises out of the action of passion, caprice, or self-will, in the ordering and regulation of the home. The parent's will is the law which the child is compelled to submit to; quite rightly; but let the child see behind the human will a Higher Will, and feel that in submitting he is bowing to the law of right, the will of God. I do not say that you can always explain everything to a child in harmony with his imperfect conception of the wise, the right, and the good. A teacher cannot always make the pupil comprehend the reason of his teachings; but there is one thing

which he can always do, he can make his pupil understand that there is a reason ; that it is not all blind submission to authority ; that there is something behind that the teacher himself is submitting to, and which the pupil will come to understand and submit to in time. And so if a parent, instead of always parading the "I will," will let the child see that there is a Higher Will behind it, all will go well. And the parent can make the child realise this though he may not fully comprehend it. A man who is habitually anxious to submit himself to the law of the Highest, who sternly controls passion and self-will, and dares not bring mere power to bear on a child, knowing that he is also a child of God, makes something manifest to that child which secures a ready, loyal obedience, and thus rests his nurture and admonition on the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

And it is well that we should remember sometimes in our orderly Christian homes, the kind of nurture which falls to the lot of the outcast children who crowd our city streets ; nor have you to go far in our sweet country lanes to find them. "I was not brought up, but dragged up," said the poor girl in the tale ; and she

touched unconsciously the root of nine-tenths of the vice which wastes and the misery which torments our world. When we picture to ourselves what homes may be, and realise what they are to millions of poor children in Christendom, it fills us with something like despair. Sad enough are the sights that meet us when we lift the cloak of our vaunted civilisation, and survey the wounds and sores which are festering beneath. But saddest of all are the dens and lairs in which myriads of myriads of young children are dragged up to a wanton, lawless and vicious manhood and womanhood, to feed continually to a fuller flow those springs of vice, disease and misery which overflow the world. And these are the children of Christ's Kingdom, the lambs of Christ's flock, whom He is ever seeking by a thousand gentle, tender touches to fold in His arms and carry in His bosom. But the world tears them out again, and flings them down to pine in its deserts or rot on its dung-hills, filling the air with the moan of their anguish, and tainting it with the breath of their corruption; so that it is hard to believe that this world into which they are born is a redeemed world, redeemed

by infinite Divine pain to purity, peace, and bliss.

Think of it, Christian mothers, with your nurslings round you in your warm, bright homes, think of these outcasts of our lanes and streets. What look, touch, or tone of a mother's tenderness ever reaches them? what beautiful light from God ever plays about their eyes? They are dragged up, kicked, cuffed, shaken, frightened into life, that is, into lying, cheating, thieving, drinking, gambling, or worse. It is well to take a bright view of our progress. The world, I believe, is always better than it seems; and even among these outcasts, as among the publicans and harlots, the pitiful eye of Heaven sees many holy and beautiful things which escape our frowning and averted sight. But unless we are to make this boasted progress our idol, we must resolutely face these problems of our Christian civilisation, and search out the springs of the poverty, vice and crime that riot in our midst. It is quite wonderful how swiftly these outcasts respond to the tone and especially to the touch of gentleness and love. Much of this passion, this frenzy, which seems to possess them is simply power waiting for its true, noble, God-

given work ; but meanwhile wasting itself in shattering the machine that was meant to be its organ, and everything else that comes within reach of its hand. It is all easily reclaimable by those who know how to touch it, this young frenzy of rebellious and riotous blood. It can easily be paraded, disciplined, and taught the word of command, by those who have learned it from the great Captain, and it can be made to march in the army that is bearing on the standards of the Lord. But we want the men and the women to do it. They are there filling your homes, Christian parents, and they wait to be trained and sent out to this saving work by you. And I do not hesitate to say that the measure in which these "Saviours of Society" after a Christian fashion, are being trained and sent forth in these days, is the feature of our progress which fills me with most thankfulness and most hope.

But even in quiet, orderly Christian homes sad mischief spreads through foolish, selfish, or unjust regulations, driving the children to deceit or evasion, creating an immoderate appetite for forbidden pleasures, and setting loose a flood of rebellious passion and self-will at last. Whatever

you do let your children always feel that you are open to the appeals of justice, that you love it, that you love to practise it, that if you have violated its precepts for the moment you are glad to return to it ; for be well assured that the one thing which will lead them, will make them submissive to rule and loyal to duty, is not your authority but the authority of God.

And there is another method of large importance which you may learn from Him. What is His demand of sinners? That they shall trust Him and turn to Him with confidence and hope, believing that whatever their transgression may be, there is no vengeful fury in His heart, but pitying and helpful love. God saves men by forgiving them, by rousing within them their higher trust, their noble shame. Try this method with your children. Oh, the agony which the certainty of a father's bitter reproaches or cruel strokes inflicts on a child conscious of transgression, yet penitent ; what concealment, defiance, hardening of heart and conscience are its fruits. Let your children trust you to be merciful to their transgressions, to understand their difficulties and temptations, to pity their shame and sorrow, and to lend a

helping hand to restore them and re-arm them for the war. Brethren, if a child, a boy or a girl, a young man or a young woman, be overtaken in a fault, ye that are parents "restore such an one, in the spirit of meekness, considering yourselves lest ye also be tempted."

One word more I will say while on this topic ; it needs to be said. If a woman have fallen from purity and lie grovelling in the dust, ye that are parents, restore such an one pitifully, tenderly, in the spirit of Christ's charity. There is nothing which so drives wretched women down to the depths of degradation and damnation as the bitter anathemas which their sisters hurl at them ; the hard, vengeful, hissing words in which they are made to understand that they have committed the sin which never hath forgiveness, either in this world or in the world which is to come. Nor is there need to spare admonition, reproof, or correction. God's strokes fall sharp and stern, while He bids us trust and commends His love. Sinners can bear stern words, stern deeds from those who show that they have hope of them ; that the sentence is in mercy and not in vengeance—not to condemn or to crush, but to save. Deal thus with your erring

children, and you will have mastered a large part of the lesson, how "to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

And the end to be sought by the culture is the faithful and fruitful service of God and mankind.

Teach your children, I again exhort you, to value supremely the riches of being, which are within every one's reach. And teach them by the only effectual method ; seek first yourselves the kingdom of God and His righteousness. We live in days in which these higher treasures, which once men lived for and died for joyfully, seem to weigh but lightly against the breath of this world's applause or its glittering gold. One thing wanted supremely in our homes is larger belief in the unseen treasures which endure. How are children to believe in these when they see parents storing up egregious wealth for them, to spare them the vigorous strain and sweat of their powers. The chief corrupters of the world at this moment, those who are leading it rapidly in the downward path, destroying its nobler and pampering its baser life, are the children of rich parents, born and nursed in luxury, and with nothing to do in life but enjoy it. These are

constantly the leaders in all our revellings ; the chief actors in all the shams and farces with which our Christian society befools itself. Lay up, again I say, more in the children, by the thorough education of their faculties. See to their power of work and their love of work, and trust God to find them work to keep them from starving, work whereby they may bless both themselves and mankind. And train them from the first in the belief that they are here for service—the service of Christ and their fellow-men. A fruitless life is a beggarly life ; the soul that does not live to bless lives to curse both itself and the world.

Do we ever faintly realise what, in the days in which Paul wrote, was meant by education in the nurture and admonition of the Lord ? For how many of these young children did it mean training for martyrdom, for calm, nay, exulting endurance of the keenest agony that the devilish cruelty of heathen tormentors could inflict on them, rather than betray the truth, deny Christ, or renounce their right to die for mankind ? And we, we pay men to fight for us, and sit at ease “beneath our own vine and fig-tree, no man daring to make us afraid,” and forget

all about the world's woe, sickness, and need ; except so far as a guinea now and then to be spent by a committee, expresses our remembrance and soothes our souls. In nothing, I think, has the commercial character of our current civilisation acted upon us more disastrously than in the decay of public spirit, of large and noble views of our relation to the commonwealth, its claims on us, its rights over us, and of the honour which it puts upon a man to spend and to be spent in its service, which animated our forefathers, in rougher and more brutal, but still very earnest, vigorous, and fruitful times.

The spirit which Christ came to inspire, and which made the early Church master wherever it moved—the spirit of heroic devotion to great enterprises of mercy, of pure unselfish care for all that makes the sickness and sadness of the world—seems well-nigh to have died out of our quiet, easy and pampered lives. But in this too, as in all else, there is the breath and the rush of a great revival among men. The dry bones are stirring, rising, and clothing themselves with flesh. Art, science, literature, politics, commerce, however they may be purified

and elevated, will not make a Church for us, as the author of "Natural Religion," fondly dreams; but we must find the means of including them within the sphere of the Church, if the Kingdom of Heaven amongst us is to be anything more than a dream. And *the* essentially hopeful sign of our times is, I say again emphatically, the growing number of cultivated men and women who are taking not only zealous and unselfish, but intelligent and methodical interest in these great themes, and above all, in Christian care for the classes and the souls that Christ came to save.

Bring up your little ones to join that holy, thrice-blessed band. Train them from the first to believe that they were sent here on that service, the Lord's service for the salvation of mankind. Interest them from their earliest years in works of ministry, and be careful, while stimulating their zeal, to clothe it with wisdom, and arm it with patience. The thoughtful, patient workmen in this field alone render the service for which God and men are asking. Blind, hasty zeal mars more than it mends, in this sphere of blessed though often tearful toil. Train them not to be afraid of the tears ; to go forth weeping

bearing their precious seed, and to be content if it is a long, long day before they can hope to come again with rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them. It is in our homes that this blessed revival must begin and be cherished. There the living workmen and workwomen are essential ; no machinery, however masterly the mechanism, can supply their place. And you, fathers and mothers, have the training of them in charge. They crowd your homes, they pine for work—work which may occupy and satisfy a spirit. God and the world will demand its trained and zealous ministers at your hands. God grant that when you stand before the Master to give in your account of a life not useless to Him and to mankind, you may have your bright band of children round you. “ Lord, here am I and the children whom Thou hast given me ;” I trained them to work for Thee ; it has been the joy of their hearts, the interest of their lives ; and now they are here to praise Thee, and to enter with the great company into Thy joy. There “ the teachers shall shine as the brightness of the firmament ; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.”

VI.

THE SACRED SORROW OF THE HOME.

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"Thy daughter is dead : why troublest thou the Master any further?"—MARK v. 35.

"THOSE whom the gods love die young," was a saying of the ancients, and it seems to have a beautiful meaning to those familiar with the tender and loving associations with which Revelation has surrounded "the Father's house" on high. But it meant nothing beautiful on those ancient lips. Like a kindred adage, "Call no man happy till he is dead," it was rather a wail than a pæan. It was a note of that deep undertone of sadness which, when the primitive heroic days were past, ran through the whole literature and life of the heathen world. In the earliest time which the rescued fragments of old world literature enable us to scan, the gay joy-notes of the children in the glad, bright home of the young Creation, seem to fill the air with the

breath of praise. But the wail soon drowns the song in all the masterpieces of the literature of mankind. In the primitive, patriarchal ages, as far as they have left their records, there seems to have been much gladness in life, and a keen sense of the goodness and beauty of the world. As society developed itself and became more complex and crowded, the sense of burden and strain takes the place of the primæval gladness; and in the classical ages this sentence about the death of the young was rather a sigh of despondency, than a song of joy and praise. It meant much, very much, about the sadness of life; it meant little or nothing about the blessed and beautiful home-life of the Father's house on high.

Those whom the gods love die young! That meant on the lips of the men of old time, they are spared the strain of the burden, the heat and the dust of the battle; they are spared the constant defeat, the frequent anguish, the inevitable decay and wasting, and the long struggle with inexorable death. Behind the sentence there was the idea that life was an over-hard battle, a too-constant pain, a hopeless wrestling with irresistible fate. Those whom the gods

love, and early call through the silent portals, said the ancients, are spared it all. They pass through the gates and vanish, unstained by sin, unworn by toil, unscarred by wounds, unwrung by remorse. What they pass to we know not. It seems all dim, dreary and chill to our life-warm touch—that world where the ghosts wander bodiless through the shades. Eye cannot follow them, heart cannot follow them, to clasp them again in a fond embrace. They are gone from our care, from the touch of our protecting and cherishing hand. But if we know not what they are and where they are, we know, at any rate, said the men of old time, what they are spared. They are saved from the pain of living; and if death be annihilation then still, “those whom the gods love die young;” they pass early, their cheeks unfurrowed, their nerves unstrained, while the sensation of life is still tingling gladness, into the realm where “the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.” It meant little more than this—this sentence that sounds so beautiful on Stoic or even Epicurean lips.

The Hindoos and our German forefathers are not alone in their sense of the sadness of life

and of the cruel order of the world, when unlit by the love of God and the hope of a blessed immortality. The discovery which our modern pessimists vaunt, and which one of them neatly formulated in the phrase, "this is the best of all possible worlds, but it would have been better if there had been no possible world," is as old as human literature. They can find nothing new to tell us, nothing that our fathers did not tell us more forcibly, about their sense of the vanity of life, and the badness of the constitution of our nature and of the order of our world. And they are right, if you can blot out the page of Revelation. Man is a beaten combatant, crushed down by a tyrannous hand, if all of him is here. It is when he plants one foot, by faith, on the eternal shore, and knows that he is a citizen of two worlds, and that the world of Christ and the Resurrection is the blessed and everlasting home of his spirit, that he can cease his wailing and raise the song of joy and triumph. Then only he becomes master alike of life's pain and death's terror; then he can watch the shadows which brood around the life of Nature and threaten to bury it under their pall, with untroubled serenity and unclouded

hope, for he sees them already vanishing before the bursting sunlight ; then he can lift up his head in right of his immortal manhood as a free citizen of a blessed, glorious, and everlasting commonwealth, "the general assembly and Church of the firstborn," destined at last to gather in that "city that hath foundations eternal in the heavens, whose Builder and Maker is God."

Yes, those whom the Father loves die young, we say, with a deeper and more blessed meaning than the men of old time could connect with the dispensations of their fettered and capricious gods. Blessed are they, not because they have passed from the inevitable pain of life to the rest of oblivion, or to that colourless, passionless realm, which was all that the imagination of the ancients could picture as the resting-place of the wreck that was left of their beloved and honoured dead, but because they have gone home ; because they have been received into the mansions in the Father's house, where, not the wreck of them, but they themselves in the strength and beauty of their immortal youth, are living before their Father's face. There they are already glowing with

intense vitality ; there they learn from benign and tender lips the lessons which are to fit them for the work and the joy of that eternal kingdom, in whose blessed ministries and activities they and we shall at length once more be one.

Death, when the lustre of heaven shines through the tomb from beyond where dwells the uncreated light, loses every touch of ghastliness or terror ; the form, before whose dread aspect we shivered and from whose awful touch we shrank, clothes itself with an angelic glory. The voice is soft and winning which summons the children home. And so, while our little ones vanish out of our homes and the glance which has been as the light of our eyes fades from our sight, and life seems bankrupt of all its joy, we can still raise a trembling song ; and we find a deeper than a sentimental meaning in the words of the poet :

Oh ! not in bitterness, not in wrath,
The Reaper came that day,
Twas an angel visited the green earth,
And bore those flowers away.

The death of the young in the first fresh bloom of their beauty and vigour, is perhaps the saddest and darkest of our experiences. It

presents in its bitterest form the cup of our domestic sorrow ; it proposes in its most absolute terms the problem of the meaning and the end of bereavement ; few homes have not been darkened by its shadow ; few hearts have not groaned, perhaps maddened over its mystery of pain. Let us study it. If we can see a little light about it, we shall have made some real progress in the understanding of the deeper mystery of life.

“Thy daughter is dead.” The child has died out of thy embrace. The bud is cut down and withered before it had blossomed into the flower, or before the flower had ripened its promise of fruit. Among the deepest mysteries in the order of God’s Providence, is that which we are tempted to call untimely death. I say in the order of God’s Providence ; this is the first thought on which our minds must rest. There runs through all the events and occurrences, the discords and what we call the accidents of life, a manifest harmonious purpose, which we presently recognise as Divine. By harmonious purpose, I mean a purpose which makes for harmony and progress ; which makes to-day larger and richer than yesterday, and develops

constantly higher and yet higher results from all the crosses, losses, and discords of life. I can quite understand the idea of those who hold that the system of things of which we and our lives form a part, has been constructed on a bungling plan, and works towards very obscure and imperfect results. There is so much confusion and cross-purpose, so much frustration of effort and hope, so much waste of power, failure of fruit, bitter disappointment and profitless pain, all round us, that it seems quite natural for thinkers who "go only" on what they can see, understand, and measure, to cry out, it is Babel; it is all a scene of confusion and wreck; it is all sheer hap-hazard, how things arrange and shape themselves, or if there be an Author and Ruler, He must be endowed with imperfect benevolence or crippled power.

I say, I can well understand how men, even the best and the wisest, may be visited with this thought; but I cannot understand how the most foolish can rest in it, can entertain it as final, and regard it as the ultimate word about the meaning and constitution of man and of the Creation which they can hope to know. They seem to me wilfully to shut their eyes to the

transcendent wonder, which is patent in the whole order of Nature and of life, that with all the apparent confusion, which seems to the faithless eye to be dire and deadly, the issue is not confusion ; that with all this apparent bungling the result is not a failure or a waste. There is a grand, stately, and beautiful order educed in man's life and in the world's life. There is a solemn and firm-stepping march of progress over all this shaking and treacherous ground. Each age builds surely and strongly a fresh course in the great temple of human history. As with Nature, so with man. Through all the fret, the waste, and the shattering shocks that seam and scar the ages of its development, the Creation emerges ever in more perfect order and more stately beauty, over whose unfoldings the morning stars are still singing aloud for joy. Compare the gross, obscene, and repulsive forms of the fauna and the flora of the Saurian age, for instance, with the grace, compactness, and finished beauty of the insects, the plants, and the animals which are the satellites of man, and then remember the tremendous convulsions, the heavings and the rendings of the solid structure of the world, in which all seemed

going to utter wreck, through which the progress has been realised, and rebuke the weak and short-sighted dread with which some are prone to watch the groanings and the struggles of the same travail in the human world. Through all the losses, crosses, and catastrophes which threaten the destruction of all that man holds dear—over which the pessimists are ever wailing as though the final overthrow were at hand—liberty, knowledge, industry, art, science, literature, domestic order, physical health, the relations of men and of peoples, government, public spirit, human enterprise and achievement, human aspiration and hope, are constantly advancing; they are ever enlarging their scope, intensifying their energy, and pressing on from the field of victory to larger and nobler triumphs. The discord, the disorder, the pain, are palpable enough, alas! Nay, I will not say alas! It is all in the line of progress; amid the rushing of these mighty wheels of the Creation, the vision of which was unveiled to the lonely watcher by Chebar's stream, I hear the voice which then streamed down from heaven rising above it all, and dominating the discords, "Blessed be the glory of the Lord from His

place." And palpable as are the sorrows and struggles of all things within us and around us, I maintain that the transcendent fact is the order which triumphs over and rules them ; it clothes itself for us, through Christ, with celestial beauty, and invests itself with the sanctity of the Divine love. Order is the supreme fact in the Creation, natural and human ; and that order is the disposition of the hand of the Almighty and Eternal God.

The saddest of all human facts lies embosomed in that order. Be sure that the blow which laid low, to human eyes so sadly, the young life which was opening with such splendid promise under the hand of your cherishing care and love, came from that higher Hand whose ceaseless, vigilant tenderness has been cherishing through all these ages the germs of the beautiful order and progress which survives and triumphs over the waste, in all these worlds above us and around us, and whose masterpiece of operation is human history. All strokes, even the saddest, nay, especially the saddest, under which at the moment you groan and writhe, are part of that ministry which is making a divine order, if you will let it, in your lives. Still it is among the

saddest sights that human eyes can look upon, youth, strength, beauty, struck down in their first prime and withered into dust. Death to the aged has a manifest benign significance. When the worn-out body groans through the daily task of living, with the sigh, How long, O Lord, how long! ever on its lips; when all the fair sights of the Creation struggle feebly through the dim eyes, and its sweet sounds come muffled to the dull ears; when the palate loathes its food, and the limbs drag themselves wearily along the world's-highway; when the comrades of youth and manhood have passed on before, and a new world, which is not as the world in which its part was played, grows up around it in which its ideas and habits seem antique and strange; the summons should have no terror which calls to that celestial sphere where body as well as soul grows young again, where all the fruits of life's struggles, toils, and conquests are gathered, where suffering is transmuted into faculty, and where the harvest of tears enriches and gladdens its reapers through eternity. Yes, we can watch the war-worn face of the veteran of life's battles grow grand and heroic in death without sadness: even with a

lofty solemn joy and thankfulness, as the light of the eternal victory flashes over it in dying, and the "It is finished" plays grandly around the stiffening lips. We can lay the life-weary form in its quiet sleeping bed with no touch of bitterness in our sorrow, and we can follow with no pang of cruel pain the enfranchised spirit to the new worlds of beauty and of splendour which have opened on its enraptured sight. No! there is no bitter grief in these tears which are wept by the tombs of the aged, who have fought their battle bravely, and well earned their rest.

But that dear child, full charged with promise that lies withered in its root, could not my darling, my one darling, have been spared! My beautiful boy, whom God gave me, as Isaac was given, to light up my life with joy and hope; the fair girl around whom all my interests and hopes had gathered, the unfolding of whose life was the task which made all that was best and brightest in my own, gone, gone! The voice which made such music in my home for ever silent; the form which was as an angel's presence there for ever vanished; the hope that lent to life its richest value for ever frustrated;

the cup of the purest joy that I ever tasted, dashed, when I had but tasted it, for ever from my lips! Ah! it is a tremendous strain on the faith, even of a faithful man, to see, as I have seen in my home, a child suffer for months keen agony with a patience, a loving submission to a holy and benign Will, and a constant thought of the sorrow of the Man of Sorrows, little short of sublime, and then, when the nature seemed wrought by suffering to something like divine beauty and perfectness, withering and vanishing out of our sight.

The burial service of the Church of England talks to us about "the miseries of this sinful life"—indeed, it is set too much in the minor key, as if there were something essentially sorrowful in the structure and constitution of this world and its life—and this would have been one of the chief miseries, if it were not for faith and hope in God. The aged, as I have said, we part with tenderly and reverently, they lie "like warriors taking their rest," and there is no moan in the benediction which we drop upon their graves. But the child, the son, the daughter, whose presence lit up the home with a gush of heaven's own sunlight, and whose loss

draws a cloud of nether darkness over our world ; it is hard, hard, to part with them. What parent who has passed under the shadow of such a calamity—and it is an experience which in some form or other few homes escape—has not been tempted, like Mary, to look up to Christ with the sad appeal, Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my darling had not died ! We wrestle hard to keep them ; our very lives cling to them ; we struggle sternly against the hand that draws them away ; we pray, we agonise in prayer, to be suffered to hold them still. We twine our heart-strings more tightly round them ; you hear them strain and crack as death tears our darlings from our embrace ; and then the sharp, piercing cry, the saddest cry of “ the human ” that comes to us from the generations who have suffered as we have suffered, and have struggled as we have struggled against the wrench of inexorable death, “ O my son, Absalom, my son, my son, Absalom ! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom ; my son, my son ! ”

From how many strained, and how many breaking hearts, is some such cry as this going up each moment into the ear of God ?

But what is the use of tears; what is the use of prayers? The sentence has gone forth; the blow has fallen; the child is dead. Why troublest thou the Master further? Death has ended all but suffering; that is left, and that will gnaw my heart till I die. The past is past; the treasure is rifled, the world is a desert, all that made light and living greenness around me has perished. And now earth and heaven are powerless to aid. Why trouble the Master further; will Christ give me back my dead? The exclamation is put into the mouth, not of the father, but of the friends and servants who came to him to spare him the waste of his strength and breath in fruitless importunity; and some perhaps had thought to spare the Master a profitless journey, and the occupation of His thoughts, which had wide interests to fill them, with a matter which had already been settled by the hand of death. But the thought was one which would naturally have arisen in the mind of the ruler himself, and would equally naturally in the same circumstances arise in ours.

The narrative in Matthew, which is but a summary, seems to intimate that the faith of

this ruler was strong enough to lay hold on the help of Christ, even in view of the stroke of death. Matthew says, the ruler "worshipped Him and said, My daughter is even now dead, but come and put Thy hand upon her and she shall live." But the narrative in Matthew is so brief that we must not press the words too closely. They may mean that humanly speaking there was no hope; the child was in the article of death, and the only help was Christ. But that narrative certainly implies that the father's faith was of a nobler and stronger temper than that of the friends and servants who feared to trouble the Master; he manifestly would have dared to trouble Him even though he saw his darling laid low by the shaft of death. But I am afraid that with most of us the thought would have been, "Why trouble the Master further? Nothing now can spare me the anguish of a bereaved and hopeless heart. While there was life there was hope, I wept and prayed, yea I agonised in prayer to God to help and save. But Heaven had no ear for my impassioned supplications. Though my heart was wrung with pain, and a life dearer than my own life was in deadly peril, the powers on high were as cold and deaf as

those quiet stars. And now what is the use of prayer? I want one thing—my child. I want to hear the prattling voice and the pattering feet; I want to clasp the hand of my darling, and to look into those deep eyes of love. Without this life is worthless. I look forward to no future if my dear ones are torn from me. Why trouble the Master? The blow has been struck; the dear form has vanished in the darkness. We hear 'the sound of a going' all round us. We catch a myriad echoes of the departing, not one of a returning, step."

Are there any who have passed through the saddest experiences of bereavement, who have watched the withering of young strength and beauty, and have strained their hearts after their darling as he vanished in the night, without facing a terrible temptation to "cast off fear and restrain prayer before God," to become bitter and querulous, to doubt the wisdom and love which rules over all, and to indulge in fierce complaint of the pitiless decrees of Providence, and the cruel order or disorder of the world? The feeling grows masterful at such moments, that death has ended everything, that there is nothing more to be said, nothing more to be

hoped, much only to be endured. While life lasted Christ could have done much for us ; but He can do nothing, we are tempted to think, when Death has ended the vigil—we can only arm ourselves with patience to endure. Few sensitive souls pass through these deep waters without some such dark experience ; without a terrible sense of utter desolation ; without fierce resentment against the decrees of Providence, and wild questionings of the love of God. The child is dead, why trouble the Master further ? He might have saved, He has chosen to slay ; what more have I to hope or fear ? Let me alone ; leave me to watch and weep by my dead !

Something like this, we imagine, would be the first instinctive thought and utterance of the nature within us, under the stroke of some shattering shock of bereavement, which had desolated our homes and poisoned all our springs of joy. And then there falls upon our ear the word of Christ, "Be not afraid, only believe" ; or, as He expressed it more at large to Mary, "Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe thou shouldest see the Glory of God ?" "This death," He says to bereaved parents and

weeping friends, "is not an end but a beginning ; only believe, and untold joys will flow out of it through eternity." Let us study the narrative and gather the light of the hope about the saddest of life's experiences, which springs from the attitude, the utterance, and the action of the Lord.

There are two broad teachings, I think, of the narrative itself which we will first consider ; and then I shall indicate two profoundly important principles, which are expounded by this and kindred narratives in the New Testament, which seem to me to open the heart of the mystery, and to justify to us what would be otherwise inexplicable in the ways of God.

I. What are the direct and patent teachings of the narrative itself ?

(i.) The language, the attitude, and the action of Christ in this hour of domestic sorrow, are intended surely to instruct us, against our hour of kindred pain, that nothing troubles the Master so little as the importunity of human need ; nothing touches Him so deeply as the cry of a wounded, burdened, and breaking heart. Sorrow is largely His chosen and commissioned minister. His culture of the seed-field of man's nature, and

of the world, is always deepest and richest when the beads of sweat, often blood-tinged, stand thick upon the brow, or when the rain of tears has softened and opened to the touch of heaven that hard, dry ground which He seeks to till, not for time only, but for eternity. So that we ought to be sure, nay, we are most solemnly bound to believe, that the time when the tears rain thickest, is the time when the Master is most lovingly busy about our lives.

“Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died,” cried the sisters in a crisis of domestic anguish, whose pathetic interest has touched the heart of Christendom through all the ages of its history. The sisters had to learn that He *was* there, with all His compassion, all His tenderness, all His power to save ; and that the death which they so bitterly bewailed, far from being a frustration of His purposes, a poison-seed sown by the enemy while He was far away, was actually the effect of that compassion, that tenderness, that power to save. And far from being troubled by that cry, that pathetic appeal, “Lord, he whom Thou lovest is sick,” He came to trouble Himself more deeply—yea, to trouble Himself to the depth of groans and

tears—that they might see, what He asks us to believe, that the seasons of our profoundest sadness are not accidental to His purposes, or occasions on which He has to haste from far to comfort and cheer; but that they lie full in the track of His wise, profound, and benignant culture of our spirits; while, far from being troubled by our importunity, He listens eagerly for the prayer of our burdened, struggling hearts, “Jesus, Master, pity, help and save.”

(ii.) For He knows, what the most faithful of us grasp but dimly, that death is not the end, but the beginning, of His highest ministries of mercy and love. Death ends all, we are always crying, by our faithless misery under bereavement, if not by our lips. Death begins all, is rather the word which finds voice on high. We are prone to think sadly of all that is ended by the inexorable hand, the bright chapter of life which is closed for ever, the dreary blank that is left. Ah! could we follow the beloved form but one step through the gloom, we should see that our “ending” is God’s beginning of a life intense, immortal, and full-charged with interest and joy. The things which eye hath seen, and hand hath handled on

earth, would seem then but as the trembling babblings of an infant compared with a man's full-voiced utterances, in presence of the things which eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, imagination hath not conceived, but which the child who has gone home has had brought within the range of his vision, has gathered into his experience, and has inscribed as the prologue of the new celestial chapter of his life. That chapter you will read one day if your faith fail not, when you too lift up your head in heaven's eternal sunlight; when for you too, through Christ, the inheritance of glory, honour, and immortality has been won.

"Only believe," said the Master, far from feeling that death, even for the moment, had ended His ministry; "the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth." And when He laid their dead darling living in their arms again, or when Lazarus, won back from the tomb, took with solemn awe his place by the old hearth fire, what was it but a prophecy and a promise that for His children He would make death the stepping-stone to a grander resurrection and a more glorious destiny; some great foretaste of which is theirs at this moment, and which they

will know in all its fulness of brightness and blessing, "in the day of the manifestation of the sons of God."

Death, as well as sorrow, lies enfolded so deeply in His order of the world, that order of human life which He has constituted, which He rules, and for whose ultimate outcome He undertakes the responsibility, that we are bound to look at it with the loving light of Calvary shining on it and around it, and to believe that "He who was dead and is alive again, who liveth for evermore, and hath the keys of Hell and of Death," sees in that death of which He holds the sovereignty, not the ending, but the beginning of His larger ministries of mercy, alike to those whom He takes home, and to those whom He leaves on earth, bereft, to struggle and suffer still. Only believe, and thou shalt see in the heart of this cloud that threatens to bury thy life in gloom, as thou hast never seen before, the glory of God.

II. Thus much of the lessons of the narrative. It seems to me that there are two important principles expounded, not by this passage only, but by the whole teaching of the New Testa-

ment, which open up the heart of the mystery, and justify the otherwise inexplicable ways of God.

(i.) The death of the young lends a divine beauty and solemnity to the home-life of this world.

(ii.) It lends equally a tender, touching, and home-like interest to the life of the awful unseen and eternal world. That is, it is equally full of instruction, comfort, and benignant meaning for the life which now is and that which is to come.

i. It lends a holy solemnity and beauty to the home-life of this world. It brings the unseen Hand to bear very directly and potently on the soul's deepest and most hidden springs. Let us suppose for a moment that there was a revealed ordinance of heaven that every human being born into this world should live to three-score years and ten, and then quietly lie down to rest, and awake in eternity.. Would it enrich or impoverish the life of the human world? I venture to think it would impoverish it unspeakably. The passage of these little ones through the veil, of infants and children, of young men and maidens, of men and women in their prime,

brings God's hand very near, and keeps its pressure on the most powerful springs of our nature, our warmest affection, and our most constant and active care.

It is not the uncertainty which is the strongest element of the influence, though no doubt that keeps us vigilant and anxious, and helps to maintain the full strain of our power. It is rather the constant contact with a Higher Will, which keeps us in humble, hopeful dependence on Him, who gives and withholds, lends and recalls, by a wisdom which we cannot fathom, but which demands our trust on the basis of a transcendent manifestation of all-suffering and all-sacrificing love. God, "who spared not His own Son but freely gave Him up for us all," can withhold from us nothing that can truly bless us, can inflict on us nothing that can truly work us harm. All our experiences of joys and sorrows are woven into one grand harmony of blessing, by the Love which so yearned over us that it suffered untold agonies to bring to us salvation. The God whose love we know, because He hath sent unto us His well-beloved Son to seek and to save us at the cost of Calvary, has won the right to

demand our faith, even to the extremity expressed in the words, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." It is this gift which makes trust intelligent and hopeful ; dependence disciplinary and ennobling. It enlarges life unspeakably by maintaining a constant comingling and inter-penetration of the interests of the two worlds. I am not sure that the chief secret of that immense impetus to the development of humanity which marked the apostolic age, was not the grand enlargement of the theatre of man's being which was the result of the revelation of life and immortality. All great stages in the progress of our race, such as the Augustan or the Elizabethan ages, were heralded by an immense extension of the visible theatre of man's activities ; and I believe that the grandest and most fruitful step of progress ever taken by the human race, was heralded by a revelation which included in man's sphere heaven and eternity.

It brings heaven all round us when we know that at any moment the veil may be lifted, and a dear life may vanish from our sight, not blessed be Christ ! into the shades, but into the brightness which is beyond. And when the

life has vanished it leaves a holy and consecrating memory in the home. Something is in the home on earth which also belongs to the home on high. Never does the home-life and all its relations seem so beautiful, so profound, so sacred, as when Death has laid his touch on "a little one," and gathered it as a starry flower for the fields of light on high. It makes the life of the home more anxious, more burdened by care and pain, but more blessed. The nearness at any moment of resistless Death makes us find a dearer meaning in the word, "the whole family in heaven and on earth"—a thought which saturates the whole New Testament, and is not dependent on one text for its revelation. We know then how precious is its meaning, and earth gains by the loss as well as heaven.

To enrich, deepen, and sanctify our experience as parents, to strengthen and purify us for the sacred task which those who have young immortals in training are called to discharge, to lend new sanctions to duty, new vigilance and earnestness to ministry, new depth and tenderness to love, God ever and anon calls the children through the veil to meet Him. "Thus," He

says to us, "thou shalt learn through tears, that thy little nook of home on earth is a holy part of the great, blessed, everlasting home on high." Full of profound and tender teaching for this life, and full, too, of a beautiful light which shines on the households whence Christ summons the little ones, is this mystery—the death of the young.

(ii.) It lends, too, a tender, touching, home-like interest to the life of the unseen and eternal world.

The home, remember, is where the children are. There are those of us who never found the deeper meaning of the Father's love and the everlasting home till a dear child had gone on before. The death of the little ones, while it ought to make the earthly life heaven-like on the one hand, is meant to make heaven home-like on the other. The Lord dethroned and discrowned Death by bearing the human form, living, through his realm of terror. The living Lord abolished Death by living on through Death, and flashing the splendours of heaven through the shades.

The children, as they follow Christ through the gloom, make Death seem beautiful as an

angel. Thenceforth we, too, have, not our citizenship only, but our home-life, in the two worlds. If we cling passionately to the past, if, like Mary, we haunt the grave, the blinding tears will dim our vision of the glory which Christ is preparing to reveal. Dry the tears, lift up the head ; look out, look up. Here is the field of battle, the school of discipline ; there dwells the home where already a blessed and joyful band is gathering. We know not their conditions or surroundings. We seem sometimes to catch some gleam of their lustrous garments, and some faint, far-off echo of their hymns of praise. But is it too much to believe that they await us there with fond and blest anticipation ; that our heart-strings, which cling to them so tightly, quicken in their hearts some responsive thrills ? Is it too fond an imagination that as we, with trembling, weary step, draw near the river, they too gather, a shining troop, to greet us on the farther shore ?

The dying see what is hidden from the living. I think that I have seen in dying eyes a joyful flash of recognition. I have heard murmurs on dying lips which the vision of things unseen by mortals alone explains. Was it a vision of the

blessed ones who are waiting there, hidden only by a filmy veil from eyes that grow keen and strong in death? See, trembling, repining heart, longing to call back to this earth thy lost darling, and make with foolish fondness the mortal home complete, see, as thy tottering steps draw near the brink of Jordan the shining company descend! They wait to unarm the weary combatant, and to lead the toil-worn, tear-stained pilgrim to the joy and the rest of Christ. Ah! there is the beloved form among them, radiant, triumphant, straining eagerly to clasp you in an embrace of immortal tenderness when your footsteps press that blessed shore. And then the words of the Master will come to you once more, with a vividness which will tune your lips to a glorious burst of praise, "Fear not, only believe!" "Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the Glory of God?"

VII.

THE SACRED BURDEN OF THE HOME

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"And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord."
—I SAM. i. 15.

THE mother of a man like Samuel must have been a woman of ten thousand; for of all the laws which seem to rule in relation to the transmission of qualities this is apparently among the surest, that the mother of a very great man must have been great among women; and the greater the man is, the more likely is he to have been nursed on tears and prayers. Hannah was "a woman of a sorrowful spirit;" as the child of tears and prayers Samuel was born. To me there is something ineffably sacred in a mother's experience. The pain is with her and the burden of the nurture. It is the holy mother who stands out as the most burdened, the most sorrowful, the most blessed

among women, in the history of the infancy and childhood of our Lord. We men know little of a woman's burdens, sorrows, and joys; a woman's power of devotion to her nursling; a woman's hiding of her own in another's life. We hear much foolish and frothy talk in these days of woman's rights. To me there is nothing so sacred upon earth as a woman's duties, a woman's life. God is revealed to us as the Father; it is the one broad, comprehensive word which describes His parental relation to mankind. But when He would use a plea of peculiar tenderness and constraining power, the father melts into the mother; "Can a woman forget her sucking child? . . . Yea, a woman may forget, but never will I forsake thee, saith thy God." We must remember that the father and the mother are essentially the one parent; just as husband and wife are "one flesh." The two blend in God. And whenever the Saviour needs an image of peculiar grace, tenderness, and love, it is the mother's nature which He draws forth and presents as the fullest image of His own. And if the bearing of another's burden be according to the mind of Christ, we can understand how it must be so. Is there anything in

this universe within our ken, which may be compared with a mother's willingness to bear with and suffer for her child? It is the most heavenly image which nature presents to us of Divine things. A woman's sorrow in her hour of anguish, transmuted into the purest joy which is known to mortals when the first faint cry of her infant breaks upon her ear, is the experience which the Saviour selects to set forth that mystery of holy sorrow in this life, out of which the most glorious joys are to be born in eternity. (John xvi. 21-2.)

It is wonderful how little we read in the Bible—nay, we read absolutely nothing—about those rights of persons, sexes, classes, and communities, the assertion or denial of which has been in all ages the chief spring of the waters of strife in our world. Men's rights, women's rights, there is not a hint of them in the Bible. The rights of monarchs, of subjects, of masters, of servants, of nobles, of slaves, find but scant recognition in Scripture. Even Onesimus, the runaway slave, was remanded to his master's brotherly love. So much the worse for the Bible, say the prophets of the "advanced school," as it is called,

among us ; advanced, no doubt, but towards a dreary wilderness of negations, in which nothing is known about the sphere out of which in all ages the purest springs of man's comfort, joy, and hope, have flowed ; while wrangling scribes and scornful Sadducees vex the air with their contentions, making this mortal life intolerable, when doing their best to destroy the hope of an immortal life beyond. The man who wants to lay down a platform of rights on the ground of which he may urge claims on, and demand service of, his fellow-men, will find no book so little helpful to him as the Bible ; and this is its glory. The Bible is emphatically a book of duties. It throws little light upon what man can claim from man. What man can do, and is bound to do, for man, it sets forth with matchless fulness and power. The only class which it pities, is not the class which cannot get its rights recognised, but the class or the soul which has not found the sphere of its duties ; which has found no ministry to undertake, no burden to lift, no self-denial to exercise, no sacrifice to offer, no cross to bear for Christ or for mankind. These are its wronged and despoiled ones ; wronged by themselves, despoiled

by Satan, of the true honour and joy of a man's life here, and of all that can be a seed of glory and blessing during the limitless ages through which that life shall endure in eternity. To the men and the classes who are screaming for their rights it says, Be silent, and gird yourselves for your duties, the rights will grow out of them, as all men will recognise, in time. The measure of your worth to the world and of the honour which you can win from it, is ultimately the measure of the service which you can do to it; even as He, in whom all right inhered, came to His world, "not that He might be ministered unto, but that He might minister, and give His life a ransom for many."

Quite in harmony with this great principle is the fact, that they have been mostly of a sorrowful spirit from whom the noblest service to the world has come. It is not the poets only who "learn in suffering what they teach in song." The prophets, I think, know more of it than the poets. *"Also the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke: yet neither shalt thou mourn nor weep, neither shall*

thy tears run down. Forbear to cry, make no mourning for the dead, bind the tire of thine head upon thee, and put on thy shoes upon thy feet, and cover not thy lips, and eat not the bread of men. So I spake unto the people in the morning : and at even my wife died ; and I did in the morning as I was commanded. And the people said unto me, Wilt thou not tell us what these things are to us, that thou doest so ? Then I answered them, The word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Speak unto the House of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God ; Behold, I will profane My sanctuary, the excellency of your strength, the desire of your eyes, and that which your soul pitieth ; and your sons and your daughters whom ye have left shall fall by the sword. And ye shall do as I have done : ye shall not cover your lips, nor eat the bread of men. And your tires shall be upon your heads, and your shoes upon your feet : ye shall not mourn nor weep ; but ye shall pine away for your iniquities, and mourn one toward another. Thus Ezekiel is unto you a sign : according to all that he hath done shall ye do : and when this cometh, ye shall know that I am the Lord God."—Ezekiel xxiv. 15-24. This unveils to us the mystery of the burden of the Lord ; a burden which

pressed with full force on the prophets, while they were commissioned to press it on their fellow-men. And mothers, too, know much of it; the mystery is not hidden from their hearts. Women of a sorrowful spirit have been the mothers of all the great ones of the world; women to whom the mystery of sorrow has nothing dreadful, to whom it has become beautiful through Christ; women who know that great duties demand great sacrifices, and who feel, when God lays a young immortal on their bosom, that the gift is sacred, and that the sacred thing has to be laid, as Abraham learned, on the altar of a submissive spirit, to be held and handled as a great trust for which solemn account is due on high.

These few hints will be sufficient to show that I have but slight sympathy with the tone of that passionate outcry about woman's rights, that fierce complaint of woman's narrow and poor opportunities, and that imperious demand for a larger and more prominent part in the public theatre of life, of which, happily, we hear less in these days than we did when the crusade first began, about a generation ago. Fierce contentions for rights bring no blessing, but rather

the noble self-denying use of powers. Happily "the woman's question," in our days is passing into an altogether higher stage of development; not because woman has fully won all that was contentiously claimed for her, but because women themselves are led to take a larger and truer view of the essential nobleness and dignity of that part on the great stage of life which is all their own; and further because the great world has come to understand that it cannot get on without the blending of the feminine quality and faculty with the masculine, in all the higher interests and activities of its life. Women are winning their way to a fair share in the public life and work of their times, not because by persistent contention they have forced their way into the citadel and compelled the men to yield the rights which they have claimed; but because society finds out now that it wants them, and that God's ordinance, "neither the man without the woman, nor the woman without the man," in the home, in the State, and in the Church, is right.

And I think that a nobler and more Christian view is being taken in these days of what life

and life's great theatre, mean. The conception in human societies of what life means, of what it is worth, has been raised immensely of late years by being emancipated from the trammels and circumscriptions of the theologians, and by being placed on the broad basis of the doctrine of the Gospel of the Son of man, once more. I think that there is more patience now with the narrows of a humble and suffering lot, because men and women understand better how much dignity may be put into it, and how much blessing may be brought forth from it, by quiet and faithful discharge of duty, in sympathy with His life-course, who "did neither strive nor cry, nor was His voice heard in the streets." And when we talk of life's great theatre in these days, perhaps a greater theatre more often opens upon us than this little stage on which we play our stormy parts for the moment, and vanish; the theatre of a drama, whose unity of place is the great universe, and "for ever" its unity of time. We realise more deeply than we once did how our work and suffering, be they more public or more private, enweave themselves into a great harmony of which all that is on earth and in heaven supplies the chords, while

the flow of the music is heard as the *Laus perennis* in God's great temple on high. And we know better now that the patient virtues, the self-denying ministries, and the graces which are in tune with the spirit and the life of Christ, have their peculiar honour both here and there ; while he who has won the palm of endurance, and has wrought most and suffered most to help and to bless mankind, wears the most lustrous and the most lasting crown. The clever, pushing, successful men of this world, who clear all before them here, and whose orbits range widest to the eye of sense and seem nearest to the sun, are but glancing meteors to the eye of those who look down upon it all from beyond the stars. While many a worn, sad heart, many a woman of a sorrowful spirit, whose rivals flout her, whose priests push her aside, may be marked already in her unknown life-course here, as a trained leader of the action of that high drama which will occupy the stage of Eternity.

And this is the true principle of adjustment of all disadvantages and inequalities. I say of women's position and rights, and of all apparent inequalities in the distribution of opportunities

of action and distinction here, as I say of all life, that to understand it you must take in Eternity. God explains nothing about either man or woman fully, within the little limits of the present. Hints, gleams, foreshinings alone, and those visible only to the trained spiritual eye, the drama of this life affords. Death collects the scattered broken lights into a focus, and presents the image in full form, only on the stage of the Eternal world. Hannah, the woman of a sorrowful spirit, won for herself a high place on the bead-roll of earth's elect. She offered her child to the Lord, and a sword pierced through her own soul also as she completed the sacrifice; but that son has been honoured through all ages as one of the grandest figures in history. But there is many a woman of a sorrowful spirit, whose name never gets written on the tablets of this world's fame, who is in training to take her place among the foremost in the "general assembly and Church of the first-born" on high.

The description of the mother of Samuel is drawn by a master's hand; we recognise the portrait at once, as not individual only, but generic. There is something which belongs to

this individual woman, but the broad trait describes the sex—there are hundreds of millions of such at this time scattered up and down the world. A man of a sorrowful spirit with just the expression and experience which these words pourtray, we should be tempted to pity as a little unmanly ; though there are some very noble ones among us whom the words would describe perfectly well. But the woman of a sorrowful spirit has a dignity which all *men* instinctively honour and reverence as something holy, in comparison with their own rude lives. No doubt a man is as fairly open as a woman to all the floods of sorrow, and as much a mark for the keen-tipped darts of calamity which darken the air of our world. We can none of us escape ; the rocks are hard, the thorns are sharp ; and bleeding, halting, the best of us must go on our way. But a man has ways of working out his sorrow which are not open to a woman. His life leads him out into a richer variety of circumstances and influences ; he can more easily get refreshment and renewal of energy for conflict and endurance. The heaviest weight of the burden of life is borne by those whose lot renders it a kind of necessity in a

time of deep sorrow, that they should sit, like Mary, "still in the house alone." A sorrowful spirit is more commonly to be met with among our mothers and sisters than among our brothers. Not the Bible only, but the great masters in the field of art and literature have full discernment of this; and it lies at the heart of the pathetic charm of some of the great master-pieces of the world.

And the reason of this is not difficult to trace. The lot of weakness among savage and half-civilised tribes is suffering; and the most polished and cultivated peoples hold in their bosom much pure barbarism still. The life of a woman in a savage state is, perhaps, the saddest thing under the sun. On her the whole sentence of labour falls with a weight that makes it verily a curse. The man lolls through life, the woman toils and strains. She must dig the soil, hoe the corn, strike and pitch the tent, bear the baggage on the march, tend the children, cook the food, and lie like a dog at the feet of her lord. The most wonderful thing in this world is the patience and endurance of its women. Work, work, work! It was of a woman that Hood sang the "Song

of the Shirt," and of a woman in Christian, civilised England too. We think that we may fairly look down with lofty contempt on the life of a savage. "We have changed all that," we say; we have righted all these wrongs, we have lifted all these burdens; we have reverence instead of torture for weakness; there is more danger of our worshipping woman and lifting her to an angel, as Christian Europe did of old, than of degrading her, and yoking her to our tasks like the beasts. Is there? I wish that you would take a day with a missionary in the heart of this great capital of civilisation, this mart of Christendom, this richest, largest, healthiest, and happiest city in the world. You would be startled to find how much of the pure savage lives still among us, under the splendid and glittering cloak of our culture. Nominally Christianity has emancipated and elevated woman. Chivalry, the child of Christianity, offered her Divine worship in recompense of her long shame and pain and lifted her to a heavenly throne. Among our upper ten thousand, the educated and cultivated classes in England, woman's life is a nobler, purer, more beautiful thing, is more

surrounded by all just honour, without foolish worship, than anywhere else in the world ; and yet how many women of a sorrowful spirit are *there*. And what of the millions of sad, weary, wasted wives and mothers—ay, and tender girls—who are bound to the yoke of almost slavish toil so tightly, that the life of a Red Indian squaw would be pastime compared with theirs ? The whole burden of the home is upon them, and half, at any rate—how often the whole—of the toil that feeds it, is exacted with pitiless rigour, till life seems to them like a dread Moloch, a brutal, tyrannous god, whose only offerings are the blood, the brain, yea, the very heart-strings of desolate and tormented victims whose groans are the sad undertone in the music of the world.

But it is not through this only, the wrongs of superior strength, the tyranny of brute force, that women of a sorrowful spirit abound. It lies in the very nature of things in a world like this. We must take it for granted that the springs of sorrow are abundant ; that man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward ; that in some shape or other the rocks and the thorns pierce us all, and

tear. It is man's inheritance in a nature which he has degraded, and in a world which he has dishonoured and deflowered by his sin. From that inheritance there is no escape. Perhaps, nay, full surely, the saddest element in that sorrow which is common to us all—I do not say the heaviest—the mere pressure probably falls hardest upon man; but the saddest, that which pierces the heart and makes us bleed inwardly, is the woman's portion in the main. This woman's sorrow was one of which she could not babble or bluster. If she bled she bled inwardly; if she moaned she moaned in spirit; and she poured out her heart unto the Lord, from whom the groaning of none of us is hid. And she is the type of millions of her sex. For consider that man's work occupies more fully and naturally his whole time and faculty, and yields to him in its reflex action the courage, the strength, the inspiration, which never fail to flow out of the vigorous and healthy exercise of the powers. Feeling in man does not so easily become master, the balance of the faculties and the emotions is better preserved. Nay, perhaps the tendency of man's life is rather to keep feeling in the background, or, at least, to get rid

of it by action ; calamities with him do not so easily reach the citadel of life and entrench themselves ; a man has successive lines of guard. And his experience on the whole tends manifestly to the hardening of his nature. Few men, I imagine, carry out of life with them the tenderness and sensitiveness which they took with them into the dusty and hot arena ; while women keep their tenderness and sympathy pure and fresh to the end. Most men probably get to look upon a certain measure of sorrow and trouble as inevitable, and they deal with it as a matter of course, to which it is best to harden themselves at once. The difficulty with them is to keep the mind and the spirit open to the higher influences, the angel messengers, which once found ready entrance where now all is locked and barred—happy if a wicket is kept open through which may sometimes pass the visitants from a higher world.

The woman's experience is just the reverse of all this ; the sphere of her duty, the staple of her experience, tend to tune to a more sensitive pitch all those chords of the being which the storms of life sweep rudely, and which moan under the stern hand of wrong. Her field of

action, her home duties, her life of ministry, mean largely an education to suffer. Her main work as mother, nurse, teacher, sympathiser, draws forth continually the soul's most delicate and sensitive fibres, and strains them to the keenest tension. Why do we want women on our School-boards and among our guardians of the poor? Not because of their intelligence, fine as that is; but because of their power of devoting themselves to that which, whatever they may call it, is a Christlike ministry to suffering and need. And such ministers must lift and bear the burden of the follies and sins of their fellows; and the more they bear it, the sadder, in one sense, the more blessed in another, do they become. While man is ever hardening himself for the rough, stern work which daily awaits him, woman is ever attendering herself. Her life is the education of feeling; every blow must bruise her, every stroke must wound. Women who have devoted themselves with the whole enthusiasm of their womanly nature to the service of their fellow-creatures, taste high joys, feel the stir of high excitements, but pay for them by making new and sadder acquaintance with pain. But it is only the few who can occupy

themselves nobly in public duty ; with the most of them if there is a burden to be borne they must feel the full pressure of it, if there is a sacrifice to be made the full tale of renunciation is required at their hands. Others work, and strive, and do, if things go wrong ; how constantly is it the woman's lot to watch and wait. It is this which makes sorrowful spirits ; the compulsion to rest quiet under a burden, and to bear calmly for the sake of others, through a round of inevitable duties, an unconquerable pain. And this sense of helplessness against a great "sea of troubles," this consciousness of being everywhere limited by superior strength, and pressed by authoritative bands which mould and perhaps mar, to her own consciousness, the development of her life, moves the woman who is of a sorrowful spirit, like Hannah, "to pour out her soul unto the Lord." And thus mainly it comes to happen that the women are always regarded and spoken of as the religious element in the community. There are countries in Europe in which it seems as though religious faith only survived in their breasts. Superstition, it may be freely confessed, has a large hold on the feminine nature—superstition the

counterfeit of faith. But the counterfeit implies reality somewhere, and there is a far deeper reason than superstitious sentiment for that religious temper and habit which distinguishes the woman in all countries and in all ages of the world. The constitution of her nature and the strain of her life tend to throw her entirely and blessedly on the sustaining arm and the cherishing love of God.

Of course there are women and women. Many who read these words may be tempted to say, We would that we could see more of these self-sacrificing, saintly women treading earth's sorrowful pathways and scattering blessing in their steps. There are more of them than the most discerning of us can see, in all the ranks and orders of womanhood, more than is known to any but to One on high. But in truth, our eyes are so filled with the glitter and vexed with the chatter of the frivolous girls and women who throng the haunts of society, whose highest ambition seems to be, as Mr. Frederic Harrison says, to make themselves weak men, and whose lowest ambition seems satisfied with distorting the gracious outlines of the form with which God has clothed their womanhood,

aping the wasp in shape, the magpie in chatter, and the popinjay in adornment, that one cannot wonder at the contempt into which womanhood has fallen among the men to whom so many women are content to be mere pets and toys, and who care for no other kind of comradeship in life. How frequently, alas! in these days is one's heart wrung with shame and pain by seeing this divinely beautiful thing, a woman's nature, so degraded and humbled in the dust, by those whom God made to be the almoners, the purifiers, the ministers and the intercessors of society.

But if we would estimate woman's nature and influence truly, we must take it at its highest. Only as it rises to its ideal is its true form revealed and the deepest spring of its influence disclosed. If you want to know what man's nature means and what it is capable of becoming, you must study it in the Son of Man, whose life is the Light of men. And just as man's nature, as it rises in dignity and power, tends to the form of life and experience of which the Divine example is set before us in the Gospels, so, regarding the woman's nature separately for the moment, this tends as it grows to its

full dignity and power to assume the form of which the "most blessed among women" is the highest womanly instance, and to find its true function in the loftiest ministries to mankind. As a woman throws herself open freely to all the influences by which her life is surrounded, and as she tries to understand the vocation wherewith she is called of God, the more, as we have seen, will she be likely to comprehend the meaning of the "sorrowful spirit" which the text describes, and to realise how large a portion of the burden of life and the sorrow of the world she must bear upon her own heart.

But it is a profound mistake to confound the sorrowful in spirit with the miserable. No doubt to the carnal mind they seem the same. Life is for pleasure, says the carnal heart, and those who know more of the tears and the moans than of the smiles and the songs have to endure the miserable lot. But to the spiritual eye the two states and experiences differ by a whole heaven. The most blessed among men was He who was known as the Man of Sorrows; and we may be sure that a great gladness, fed from Divine springs, uplifted His heart and spirit and shed a

beautiful and by no means sad serenity around Him, as He moved along life's pathways surrounded by His chosen band of companions and friends. Paul, though sorrowful, was "always rejoicing;" and to the poor and persecuted flock who were "killed all the day long and accounted as sheep for the slaughter" he wrote, nor felt that he was mocking them by writing it, "Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say, Rejoice." Augustine, Alfred, Bernard, Francis, Dante, Columbus were men of a sorrowful spirit, and yet they knew moments, and many of them, when they lifted the cup of the purest joy that mortals can taste while they prayed, toiled and suffered for their fellow men. They were men of sorrows because of their pure and lofty ideal in a world of degradation; and because of their keen and sensitive natures, so tightly strung as to make moan to every sigh of sadness or breath of calamity that might sweep by. Such men are always full of profound sympathy with human pain and wretchedness, and have a heaven-born instinct of pity, of help, of self-sacrificing ministry, which keeps them always strenuous about the saving of those who too often care not to be

saved. But there is no misery in this. Luther when he stood before men and devils and said "Here stand I, I can do no other, God help me," was filled with a lofty and sacred joy. When a man is doing that which he cannot but do, moved by a great overmastering constraint, while an inward voice and a voice on high are murmuring Well done, do not pity that man though a stake or a block be before him; he is the blessed man though for the time a man of sorrows; he has heaven's peace within him, heaven's light around him, heaven's height above him, and a Hand outstretched to uplift him and place him, when the strain and the pain are over, among the elect spirits before the eternal throne.

And perhaps the strongest argument for immortality, next to the word and work of the Lord who brought life and immortality to light by His Gospel, is this sorrowful strain of the noblest natures, the men and the women whose lives are laden with the richest ministries of benediction to mankind. The Highest was the Man of Sorrows; and according to the elevation of the character and the unselfishness of the heart and aim of His dis-

ciples, does sorrow for the most part enter into their lives.

The Son of God in doing good,
Was fain to look to heaven and sigh ;
Nor can the heirs of sinful blood
Seek joy unmixed in Charity.

The greatest lives lived on earth are saturated with the martyr spirit. There are those in every great company who, for the love of Christ and of the race which He has redeemed, are daily lifting and bearing the burdens of others, and taking the sorrows of others home to ache in their own hearts. The sorrowful spirits are of no sex or class, and they abound in such a world as this. It is the surest witness to us that beyond the bounds of this visible sphere, there is a world in which the far-off interest of tears will be gathered, and the pain of this divine travail will be turned into everlasting joy.'

And these women of a sorrowful spirit, though they ache sometimes and sigh under the pressure of the burden, have their moments of pure joy and even of rapture when they taste on earth the bliss of heaven. And to me such natures have an exquisite charm ; none of the gay ones know the secret of the spells which

they lay upon earnest hearts ; in truth they are the strongest link which binds this earth to the higher world. "It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting," said one whose large and deep experience lent peculiar emphasis to his words. And if you want to be truly gladdened by human fellowship, seek those in whose eyes there is the charm of a holy but not unhappy sadness ; they will put you in the way, if you learn their secret, of the noblest work, the purest satisfaction, the most divine and lasting bliss.

And, as I have said, the women, because so many are of a sorrowful spirit and are so conscious that their arm is all too weak for the great work which they have to do and the heavy burden which they have to bear, have been in all ages and are still the specially religious element in the community. Maternity and the nurture of children bring them very closely and tenderly into contact with the deepest mysteries of being, and lead them to yearn towards the Being who is in the heart of the mystery that they may be kindled and cherished by His life and His love. Women cannot believe easily, unless they have been

much wearied by the "cant" which has so overlaid the Gospel in the Churches, that they are living in a loveless and Fatherless world. "The Father" has naturally a large meaning to a woman's heart. Her nature is a kind of sacred ark in which the idea of the Divine Fatherhood is shrined, and whence its light streams benignly on the self-orphaned world around.

And the women of a sorrowful spirit, for the same and many other reasons, have a deeper insight into spiritual truth, a quicker response to spiritual teaching, and a readier aptitude for spiritual work than falls to the lot of the masculine nature, in any but its highest examples. No doubt the special qualities of the two sexes constantly interpenetrate, and blend happily in the men and the women who stand forth as the elect spirits of their time. There are men who have no little of the delicate feminine fibre in their nature, and women with something of the masculine toughness and tension, and these are probably in either sex the finest human instruments by whom God is in all ages accomplishing His purposes of mercy in our world. But the woman's deep insight into spiritual truth and quick power of apprehension remains her

noblest endowment. The women seem to have had fuller comprehension of the scope of Christ's teaching than the wisest of the Apostles. They were the last too at the Cross, and the first at the tomb. There was nothing incredible to them from the first in the glory of the Resurrection day. Their vocation in any age, did they fully understand its greatness, is to keep the inner eye of humanity clear, and open to the higher Divine teachings, while breathing, often with tearful eyes and burdened hearts, the perpetual human intercession into the ear of God. How many tears and prayers rise each night from women of a sorrowful spirit to hallow the atmosphere of our world, and prevail like Hannah's to win a rich blessing for mankind;

For the true refuge of all sorrowful spirits, and the true source of their power, is on high. They pour out their souls unto the Lord; and who shall describe the peace which passes into them, and it may be into those for whom they plead with Him? These women of a sorrowful spirit are no noisy sufferers; as with Hannah their pain is seen by those who can see, but no moan is heard. Happy if like her they have learned

the true way of deliverance, and can pour out their souls unto Him whose glory it is to help and to save. The world cannot help them; no will or power of man, no "bill of rights," can bring to them relief. It is in the conditions of their life, in their constitution and their relation to all things around them, that the springs of their sadness lie. It is their quick sympathy, their high ideal, their ministering instinct, the care and pain of the motherly nature, the time to think, feel, perhaps brood, in the quiet and seclusion of the home, which cast the shadow of sadness over their lives. And this no strong will or masterful hand can cure. With how many women the sadness deepens into bitterness, and the complaint dies down into despair. They feel that the current of things is too sternly against them; they are dashed hither and thither by wills stronger than their own, or by eddies of force that mock their control. "All these things are against me," is the bitter cry of their spirits; "was I made only to suffer? will it ever be otherwise? is there any world in which I shall have anything to do but to endure?" The example of Hannah may teach them the blessed lesson. She was in bitterness of soul,

she prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore. And there, prostrate before His face, she learned that there is a high and solemn sense in which the most desolate are the least forsaken, the most sorrowful are the least comfortless, the most weak are the least helpless, if their extremity empties them wholly of trust in man, and casts them on the sustaining arm and heart of God.

And now let us consider what is implied in this outpouring of a human soul before the Lord.

It is not wrestling hard in an agony of supplication for some boon which we may think essential to our happiness, and making our faith in God hang on the result. There is many an importunate prayer which is simply an effort to strike a bargain with Heaven, and is really pure selfishness at heart. Give me this, the suppliant cries, and I will serve Thee ; withhold it and Thou hast lost a devotee. Hannah when she poured out her soul unto the Lord left her burden with Him ; and before the answer came to her "the woman went her way and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad." The prayer had comforted and strengthened her, she could wait the Lord's time and way of deliverance. The truly sorrowful spirits have had

the imperious self-will broken down within them, and they know as the fundamental principle that God's will is both good and right. What they chiefly need, before even the object of their desire and striving, is the sympathy of the All-wise and Almighty friend with whom lies the decision ; and they find a blessed rest in being able to pour out the whole tale in His ear and say, Thou, Lord, knowest it all, now do Thou what seemeth to Thee to be best. They tell it all as a child babbles its trouble at the mother's knee ; and great peace enters into their hearts in knowing that a wiser and stronger now has it in hand, and that whatever happens there is always Heavenly sympathy and love. "To pour out the soul," as things gush out when the seal is broken and the hidden thoughts of the heart are laid bare, is to utter the whole tale of our burden, not in orderly conventional phrases, but eagerly, tumultuously, entirely, as to one who knows all our folly and weakness, and loves better than He knows. We need not be afraid to lay before God the whole passionate outburst of our hearts ; He knows that we are foolish, wayward, fretful children, and He asks us to bring all our desire to Him. Then there arises in our hearts the

feeling which filled Hannah with such perfect rest. She was able to say, Lord, I have laid it all before Thee, now it is Thine to undertake for me, do as Thou seest to be good; the burden now is Thine, the work is Thine, the praise shall be Thine; if the child is given he shall be called Samuel ("asked of God"), and shall be devoted from the womb to Thy service, if not, the sweet sense shall be mine that the Infinite Wisdom is now my counsellor, and the Everlasting Arm my stay. Here is the true refuge of a sorrowful spirit, pure, child-like trust in God.

And this lifts at once the burden of care. There is rest in the Lord. When once we can say, Thy will be done, not as the confession of a hopeless weakness but as the expression of a triumphant faith, the storm is over, and immediately there is a great calm. That man is master of the conditions and circumstances of his life, who can see them all under the hand of God, and can say from the heart, Thy will, my God, be done. He ceases to fret and strive; he knows that there is One above who loves him perfectly, and who could easily put the object of his passionate longing into his hand, and who in giving or withholding can have no meaning

but blessing, here and in eternity. Misery is nothing but the pain of striving desperately to have our own way and not God's. To pour out the soul before the Lord is to end the struggle, and with it to end the pain.

"Therefore let no man love anything, for the loss of the beloved is evil ; he who loves nothing and hates nothing has no fetters." Thus runs the Buddhist Gospel. This is the rest at which Buddhism aims. The principle of a true Christian rest in God solves quite otherwise the problem of life. Let a man love everything that ought to be loved, and hate everything that ought to be hated ; let him open his heart freely to all the influences of the world around him, and welcome all the manifold experiences of life, because he believes in the loving hand of One above him who, if he possesses his soul in patience, will cause them all to work together for his good,—this is the Christian solution of the enigma. "O rest in the Lord, wait patiently for Him, and He shall give thee thy heart's desires."

But there is something more than this. It is not merely a struggle ended. To the sorrowful spirit the sense of companionship, of heart-deep

sympathy, is infinitely dear. And what companionship, what sympathy can be like Christ's? To pour out the soul before Him is to feel His presence, His look, His touch, as the "Friend that sticketh closer than a brother." It is as the mother's voice to the child lost in the night. A living glow steals through the pulses of the soul that has been chilled and numbed by sorrow. It has shared its grief with One who can enter into the depths of its experience, and from whom none of its secrets are hid. And the living presence of the living Brother, whose wisdom, strength and tenderness are absolute, inspires boundless confidence and hope. Near to such a One, who is able and willing to save to the uttermost, a heavenly sense of rest steals into the spirit, and the sorrow already begins to turn into the everlasting joy.

And there comes to us through this Divine fellowship the full vision of the infinite compensations of eternity. The curtain of this night of sorrow gets lifted; the horizon recedes, and we are able to take into the field of our vision—for the explaining of all mysteries, the righting of all wrongs, the healing of all wounds—the infinite future. This earth has not much ministry

to offer to the sorrowful spirit, beyond the dreary Agnostic gospel—waste no time or strength in striving against the inevitable. When the sorrow has struck home and fixed its barb within, the only hope is from eternity. Then there will be room to work out to clearness the partial and perplexed patterns of the woof which we are weaving darkly and sadly here. I yield me to Thee, O my God, to do with me as Thou wilt through this life; I cannot see whither all this is tending, and why the aim and desire of my life so systematically eludes my grasp; but Thou knowest, it is Thy work, and Thou hast eternity, and I have eternity, in which the meaning of it all will be made plain.

It is out of these women of a sorrowful spirit who pour out their hearts unto the Lord, that God is electing and training His chief helpers in the work, which is now happily recognised on every hand as the Divine work in our time and in all time—the work of the elevation and regeneration of society. There is a noble army of martyr-like women busy in our midst, helping, healing, saving, wherever they move. How many of them first heard the call and set their hand to the task in a moment of utter

desolation, which would have been hopeless, but that they poured out their hearts unto the Lord. Then the constraints of the Divine love were laid upon them, Christ took them and sealed them for His own. Their sorrow became their consecration to share the ministry of the Man of Sorrows ; their pain, through the transforming touch of Christ, became the spring of boundless solace, strength and hope to mankind. Perhaps the most blessed, as it is also the most hopeful, feature in the life of our times, is the measure in which the womanly side of our common nature is offering its healing, saving power for the higher service of society. We are entering apparently on a new era ; the woman's hand is getting to work on our hitherto insoluble social problems. Pauperism, prostitution, drunkenness, vice, crime, and epidemic disease, are beginning to pass under the medical hand of instructed, intelligent, self-denying, self-devoted womanhood ; and before another generation has passed away, society may have a new revelation of the extent to which influences that heal, purify and regenerate, may be extracted by Divine alchemy from the mystery of human pain.

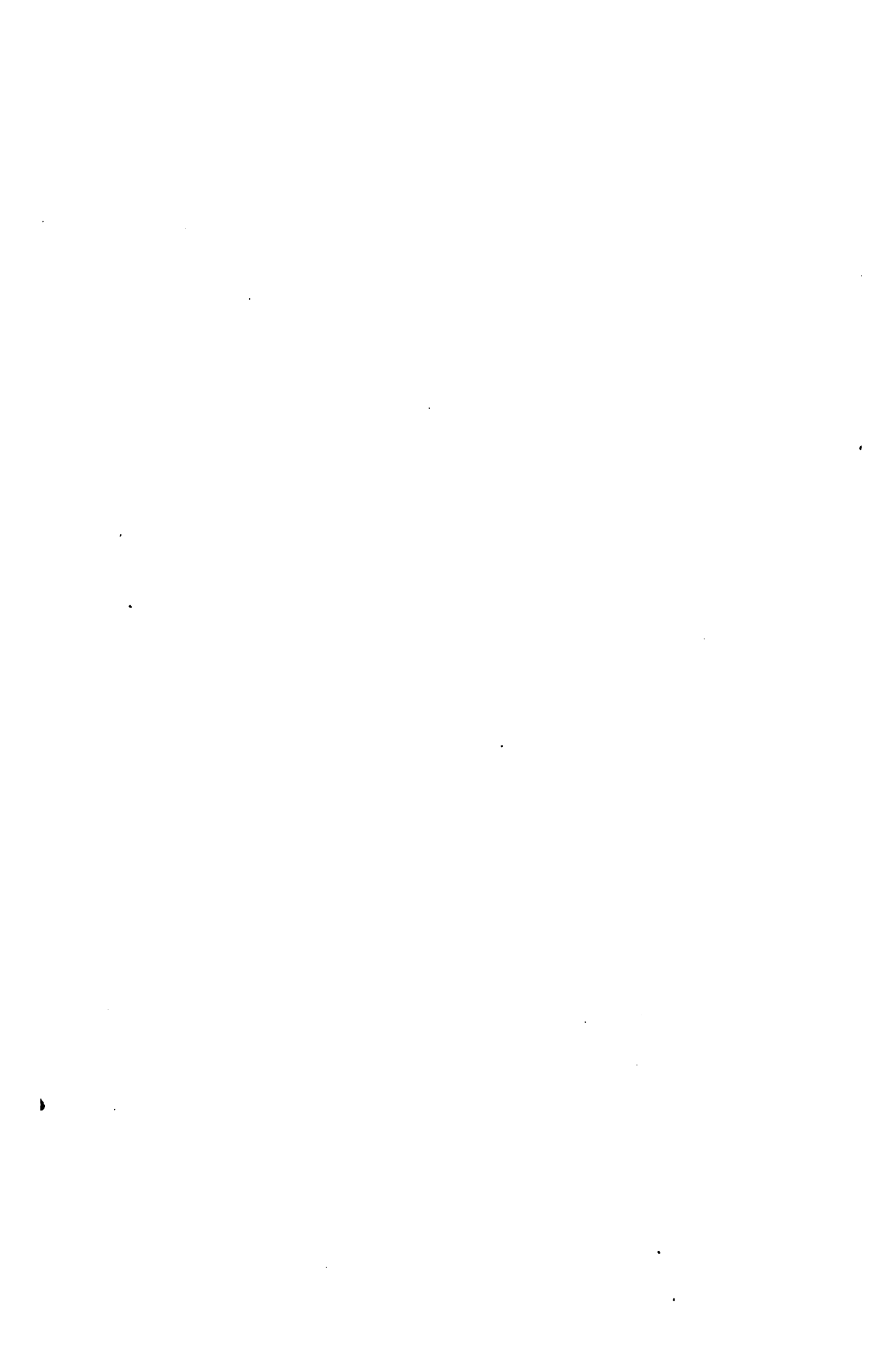
But there are many women, and men too,

though in fewer numbers, who in these days devote themselves with strenuous charity to the ministering work which uplifts and saves the classes whose penury and misery are a standing menace to society, but who yet never open their lips, far less pour out their hearts, to the Lord. They have the strain and the burden of Christ's ministry, for every ministry which comforts, helps and saves mankind is ultimately from Him, pressing upon and often well-nigh crushing their hearts, but Him they know not. They profess themselves ignorant of His name while they are busy about what is in reality His work. What shall we say of them? Well, some of the blessing they gather; they know something of the gladness while they taste fully of the pain. But they lose the best. They lose the "Well done good and faithful servant" from Divine lips. They lose the glorious sunlight; the pallid moonlight is all that lights and gladdens their life. Ah! would they but pour out their hearts unto the Lord, would they but lay hold on His strength, and work in conscious and blessed fellowship with Him the works that He loves, it would lend a light to the eye, a magnetism to the touch, a tenderness to the

tone, a power to the word, as they tread the path of self-denying ministry, which would make that ministry thrice helpful and thrice blessed. The burden is theirs, the sorrow is theirs, what they will not make theirs is the pure and glorious joy. Blessed they who, while doing Christ's work lean on Christ's strength, and feel their hearts glow under the breath of His ineffable love. It is those who love most, who live most, who suffer most—and these bear upon them most legibly the mark of the Lord Jesus—who stand highest on the roll of the elect of earth, and “of the general assembly and Church of the first-born” on high. It was the *Mater dolorosa*, the mother of all sorrowful spirits, whom the enthusiasm of Christendom enthroned as the Queen of Heaven. And there will be the stain of tears upon the cheeks, and the scar of thorns upon the brows, of those who at last shall wear the robes and wave the palms of the victors before the great High Throne. And there will be a holy undertone as of remembered strain and pain in the voices that swell the new song of triumphant praise, “Salvation be unto our God that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever.”

VIII.

THE DEPENDENTS OF THE HOME.



VIII.

THE DEPENDENTS OF THE HOME.

“Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ ; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers ; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart ; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men : knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free. And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening ; knowing that your Master also is in heaven, neither is there respect of persons with Him.”—Eph. vi. 5—9.

VARIETY, is the key to the order of the Creation, and the secret of much of its wonderful charm. Perhaps the most marvellous feature of the glorious Cosmos around us, is the variety with which God clothes and cloaks its stern unfaltering order, and wreathes what would else be terrible in its monotonous severity with dimpling smiles. The years repeat themselves, but not the days. No day is the exact likeness of either its predecessor or its successor. A little longer or a little shorter, a little

brighter or a little gloomier, a little warmer or a little colder ; always there is change. Now the masses of rain-clouds gather and sweep like a swift-winged army through the sky ; then the sunlight scatters them, and earth flashes up to heaven a glad glance from the myriad drops that gem the ground. Day and night repeat themselves, but the days are various in their expression and experience as the skies in April ; and the nights—who shall tell what deep delight, what pure and perfect pleasure, the waxing and waning moon has added to the life of mankind ? It is very marvellous, is it not, that in the great spaces of the universe, the fairest orb in the sky should have been so set in its orbit with regard to the earth's shadow, that the night should be made, if possible, more full of charm than the day, through the constant inconstancy of the satellite which rules it ; and which moves the tides, with all their grand monotony, to an inconstancy kindred with its own ? No tide exactly repeats itself any more than the days and the nights. There are always the spring tides and the neap tides, and there are the great spring tides at longer intervals, varying the variety. And the seasons—think what that

slight inclination of the earth's axis has been fruitful of ; what infinite charm it has lent to the experience of life and the aspect of the world. The whole scheme of things appears to have been constructed, if it is not wrong to use so mechanical a word, with a view to the utmost possible variety in the scenes and the influences by which man is surrounded ; and the order of the heavens where this rich life has its spring—from heaven this, too, descends—repeats itself in the physical features of the world. There is the broad and radical contrast of land and ocean ; ocean mobile, fluent, subject to sudden and passionate changes, but yet the element of monotony, the monotone in the chord of Creation ; land broken into every possible variety of form, outline, and composure—mountain, valley, plateau, hill, prairie, meadow, rolling upland, soft savannah, savage desert, and sunny, smiling pastures ; while rivers glide through the valleys, torrents foam from the mountains, brooks purl or babble through the glens, and fountains sparkle like children's smiles in soft nooks of shade. Then land and sea have their myriad varieties of interpenetration—straits, bays, creeks, estuaries, isthmuses, and peninsulas.

Earth prolongs the rich harmony of variety which heaven commences, and surrounds man's life at every point, at every turn, with some new feature to stir his intelligence and gladden his heart.

Nor is it without significance that the peoples who have played the greatest part in history, who have carried development to its highest pitch, and written their record most deeply in the archives of our race, have been born, nursed, and educated where these varieties are richest, where, not the grandest, but the most exquisitely modulated and expressive features of physical beauty have been spread round with lavish hand. The Jews, the Greeks, and the Romans were, one would say at once, the leading races in the old world, the races which have left and are leaving still the deepest mark in history. It would be difficult to find countries in this world where the variety is greater than in Palestine, Greece, and Italy ; where Nature is more rich in charm and varied in expression, always with some new mood or form of influence, like a coy maiden, to tempt, to stimulate, and to delight mankind. Yes ! there is one country where this charm of variety is more

conspicuous still ; our own sunny, smiling, and inconstant England ; where every element and form of Nature is taxed to exhibit its utmost of vicissitude, and where the only constant thing is inconstancy. We murmur at and groan over the changes which Nature is ever ringing around us. Foolish we ! They help in no small measure to make us the healthiest, the heartiest, the most industrious, the most prosperous, and the most powerful people in the world.

But what has this to do, you may ask me, with the wise rule of dependents ? Simply this : that the rich variety which is the key to the order of the earth and the heavens, is equally the key to the order of human society. The heavens and the earth repeat themselves in man in higher forms and to nobler ends. Diversities of human endowment secure as wonderful variety of interests, activities, and functions in the life of society. Civilisation is really just the development of this variety. It is the breaking up of the simple monotonous order of patriarchal society, and the establishment of those inner differences and oppositions, through the various development of individuals and of classes, which look like confusion, but are really the rudiment of a

higher order, as in the organisation of truly civilised communities amply appears.

Always hitherto there have been in all societies, but most notably in highly organised societies, two broad classes, with a multitude of minor classes bridging the chasm and linking the extremes, out of whose action on each other and the responsive reaction the development of the higher forms of society have sprung. Always there are the rich and the poor, the masters and the servants, the employers and the employed; and always, as the society progresses, there come to be "the upper ten thousand" in the inner sphere of ease, culture, and refinement, and the toiling millions in the outer circle of ignorance, toil, and penury, to many of whom life is a constant wearing struggle, with faint hope of rest on this side of death. Were this life all, the dire inequalities of endowment and condition which reign in all civilised societies would be a spectacle full of pain, which might well grow to torment in sensitive and finely-strung natures; indeed, with all the light which immortality casts upon it, it is "a sair sight" still, and hard to be endured. "Blessed be ye poor," said the Master, and the

words must have profound meaning on His lips. But the blessing has a long range ; it can only fulfil its promise in eternity. It is as culture for the work and the joy of the higher life that poverty bears the palm from wealth and splendour. One of the grandest arguments for immortality is based on the condition of the toiling masses of mankind. It is hard to understand how the merciful God could bear to look upon the struggle, the pain, the festering misery of such a world as this, unless He saw that it was comprehended in a great scheme of blessing, with eternity before it in which to realise its fruits.

Some portion of the wisdom of the Divine counsels, in suffering such strong differences of condition to obtain and endure in the life of society, we can already understand in the light of this world ; the rest we shall understand when at last the whole result of the experiment of freedom is gathered up on high. Society organises itself on this basis of diversity, inequality of gifts and endowments ; we will not say inequality of condition, for who can tell which is lowest and which is highest in the full account ? And hence there are always, among

other results, classes to rule, and classes to serve ; and we think that we have settled a deep question when we say that it is so ordered because so much of the higher joy of life springs out of ministry ; man's ministry to his fellow men. There is a great truth in this ; in fact, it is the radical truth if it is grasped in its wholeness. If it means, as I am afraid it often does mean, that there must be always a stock of the poor and ignorant kept on hand, that the cultivated classes may be sure of finding some to serve them, and to draw forth their higher faculties in ministry, it is dreary sophistry. And yet something like this seems to me to lie at the root of the indignant tone of complaint which one often hears about the independence of the working classes, the difficulty of getting servants, the wages which servants ask, and the like. There is a secret notion, I fear, with many, that Providence has, by a kind of unwritten compact, undertaken to keep the working classes in their humble place, and to have a supply of servants always available for the rich on moderate terms. The injured tone is that of a man who feels that a tacit understanding has been departed from, and that

he is left to struggle with difficulties not contemplated in, what he understood to be, the providential arrangements of his life.

And here do not let me be misunderstood. Cultivated persons may think, and very wisely, that the working classes as a rule are foolishly independent, and stand often in their own light ; and masters may very well think that servants are constantly over-exacting or restless, and that they would do much better for themselves if they would stick steadily to service, and give up their finery, gadding about, and love of change. There is sure to be a great deal of truth in such judgments, as there would be in the judgments which servants might pass on many a foolish habit of their employers. On the whole, I think, after much observation and experience, that unwisdom is very evenly distributed among all classes of society. But the spirit which is to be condemned, because the Lord condemns it, is the spirit which takes it for granted that the rich have a certain right to service from the poor, and that employers may fairly expect that the employed shall always be forthcoming on just terms of remuneration ; and which would regard a state of

things in which the humbler classes have grown so prosperous by independent industries that it is difficult to tempt them into service, as a subversion of the fundamental order of society.

At the root of all sound thought on this subject must lie the principle that there is no respect of persons or classes with God. Providence has no contract, or implied contract, with the upper classes of society. God beholds all with equal eye, and for all classes He has equal care. And if in the order of the development of society the humbler classes can so lift themselves into independence, as to free them from the yoke of service, serious as would be the disturbance to the comforts and conveniences of the privileged classes, it would be a result which the Higher powers would contemplate with satisfaction, and in which all Christian hearts would be bound to rejoice. There seems to be no likelihood of our advancing to such a condition of things so rapidly as to alarm the most conservative. There is always the inequality of endowment to maintain the diversity of condition. No doubt that would be largely mitigated by the progress of a truly Christian civilisation. Improvements of parents and of

conditions of life will result in improvement of children, and greater equalisation of capacity. But there is a cause working here which lies deeper than circumstance ; culture can do much to redress sad conditions, and to give to all a more equal chance ; but there is One at work distributing to every one severally as He will, whom culture cannot master, and to whom a dead level uniformity of faculty and condition is not the ideal of a perfect human society.

At the same time, the progress of society is a progress in the limitation of the numbers and the dependence of the class that supplies our servants ; the cultivated class will do well not to fix its mind too firmly on the axiom that it has a right to be waited upon ; and it will be wise to prepare itself to supply by machinery, or else to dispense with, much of the menial service which it now enjoys. But for the present the wise management of dependents will be an important element, in the problem of the conduct of life in the Christian home, as well as in the Christian State. We may be sure that the variety of classes and conditions which is part of the order of the great universe, is so ordained that each has a very definite good belonging to

it, easily within reach of its hand ; while it has a very definite relation, like that of the limbs and organs of the body, to the good of the whole. There is a blessing within reach of those who rule and a blessing within reach of those who serve, which are equally precious in the estimation of heaven. There is a grand moral isomerism running through all the diversities of society. As in the body, the honour and advantage are more equally distributed than at first sight appears. The Lord of all could say, "Blessed be ye poor," while urging them to a diligence which would release them from the pressure of poverty, and bring all the strength and joy which spring from culture within their range. The exhortation, "Nevertheless, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God," far from stereotyping the order of society, unfolds a principle of vital progress. It gives to man the full, rich blessing of his actual condition, while it stirs and trains him to progress, and brings the prizes of a noble ambition fairly within his reach.

The Christian principle which regulates the relation of rulers and subjects, masters and servants, in the State and in the home, is set

forth by the apostle in the same passage from which we have drawn the exposition of the deeper and dearer relations by which the home is itself constituted, and which are images on earth of the most sacred and close relationships of heaven. (Eph. vi. 5—9; Col. iii. 22, iv. 1.)

The master and servant in the Christian home are related to each other in virtue of their common relationship to a common Lord. Their relation and duty to each other are but a province of their relation and duty to Him. This is the fundamental principle of the Christian order of society. On this basis Christianity aims at the social regeneration of the world. Man's duty to his brother man is not his supreme duty; it is but the earthly part of the supreme duty which he owes to God. Here is a regulating principle of incalculable power, and while it regulates it inspires. It places human duty on an absolute and permanent basis. It gives the firmest and clearest law which can lay its mandate on the human spirit; while it applies, in relation to all mundane duties, the strongest stimulus which can stir man's nature; not the sense of duty only to the Author of his being and the Ruler of his destiny, but the love

of his heart to God his Saviour, the God who has redeemed him by His mighty, all-sacrificing love. There are those whose "loves in higher love endure." This describes the principle of Christian duty to mankind. It is rooted in, and nourished by, a higher duty, which claims, under most blessed and sacred sanctions, the whole being for its service, while it presents the most inspiring motive by which that service can be constrained.

Here, then, is the root of the relation of the master and the servant in the Christian home. The two are one in a common servitude, and owe to each other the recognition of that sacred communion, in the service which is demanded on the one hand and rendered on the other. Both the one and the other must have respect to a higher law, and the eye and the hand of a common Lord. Now all this, I daresay, seems very unpractical, and far away from the needs and the experiences, the frets and the exigencies, of daily life in such a world as this. But the ideal is the reverse of unpractical. It is the men who have the purest and loftiest ideals in sight who do daily the noblest practical work for mankind. The use of the ideal is to make the practical

fruitful. Practical activity, which is fed by no inspiration from the higher springs, soon loses its vital energy, and its power to help and to bless society. It was the men who held this idea of their duties and relations steadily in sight, who saved society in the apostolic age from the moral decay through which it was steadily settling down into death ; and it is just in the measure in which this idea is honoured and believed in States, in homes, in hearts, that the movements of society work smoothly, and its relationships are more full of blessing than of sorrow to mankind.

And we believe that this Christian view of the relations and duties of the home, is far more largely fruitful in elevating and sweetening the home-life than a survey of the surface of society would seem to indicate. Much that is best, and most large in blessing, in the world's life does not court the garish light in which our generation delights ; it hides itself away in the quiet sanctuaries of humble, simple, faithful hearts. But none the less is it a power. The faithful servant who makes the interests of the family his own, nay, closer than his own, is one of the most valuable and one of the most honourable

members of society. There are few who could not better be spared ; and such are not rare, thank God ! in our land. Did families make themselves better worth serving, they would rapidly multiply, and would relieve us from the complaint that mercenary service is so scarce and so poor.

And in how many myriads of such, scattered about the homes of England, is the Lord's service the inspiring motive ? For the Lord's sake they bear many an angry, ungrateful word, and render many a thankless service, which He knows and marks, and will one day honour, though it escapes the notice and honour of mankind. Happy the family that has such faithful, loyal service for its ministry. Here you will find a fidelity that no temptation can corrupt, a strength that no common strain can break down. And families, if they will, may surround themselves with such loving, trusting dependents. Nothing quickens trust like trust, or love like love.

And ye servants, consider how this Christian idea of service elevates and dignifies your daily toil. It is the Lord's work which you are doing day by day, as you fulfil your round of mono-

tonous duty. It is for the Lord's sake you bear the burden which would else become over-wearisome, and endure quietly much that it would be far easier to resent or to revenge. But the Lord's "well done," makes patience, meekness, gentleness, kindness, springs of the purest pleasure; while it lifts the higher ministries of thoughtful care and loving toil to a level which constitutes the servant a work-fellow with the angels, who hearken to the commandments and do the behests of the King of kings on high. (1 Peter ii. 18-25.)

A second principle which demands recognition in a wisely-ruled Christian household, is reciprocity of obligation. Master and servant are one in community of service to a higher Master, and they are one in community of obligation to each other. The one finds the same profit and advantage as the other in the service; nay, if it is fairly weighed, the master's debt is the larger of the two. I know that the popular notion is that the one who pays the money confers the benefit; and that the humble attitude and sentiment of the recipient of a favour become the servant who receives the wage. But strictly speaking, he who receives the service has the

best of it. A certain humility and deference no doubt is becoming in the dependent, but on quite other grounds. Superior intelligence, culture, and manners will, as a rule, be found in the employer. Where these are left to exercise their natural influence, and no assumption of superiority is based on the mere payment for service, the honour due to the superior in the scale of society will, as a rule, be frankly rendered. Real superiority mostly gains frank and loyal recognition, while that which is asserted on the ground of mere externals of any sort irritates and inflames.

The notion that the upper class has a kind of right to the service of the lower, and that the payment of the service is a kind of favour, comes down to us from the feudal era of society. That era was much nobler in its conceptions of human relations than surface students of history suppose. The superiority claimed was a real superiority of power, and was held to involve the duty of protection. When a poor man became the "man" of a lord, the service claimed on the one hand was balanced by the protection extended on the other. The lord's duty was as clearly and rigidly defined as the vassal's ; if the vassal was

bound to give his life for the lord, the lord was bound to maintain the cause of his vassal even unto death. But the vague notion which has survived, that the hirer of service confers a favour in hiring, while the servant receives a favour in being taken into pay, is fatal to all truly loyal relations in the household. I feel just as thankful to my servants for serving me, as I expect them to be for the shelter and care of the home which I offer to them. Nay, I am fully conscious that their service is more important to me than my pay is to them. They could probably live somehow with tolerable comfort if my wage were to fail them ; but if their service were to fail me it would break up the whole framework of my life. There is a perfectly reciprocal obligation, and the manner and temper of the employer must recognise it. He must be heartily thankful for the service, if he is to have loving, loyal servants about him in his home.

Nothing will tend to establish healthy, hearty relations between the two classes in the household, like a kindly recognition of the value of the service which the servants render. You may say that it will make them presuming. My

observation and experience lead me to the opposite conclusion. Dependents grow presuming when they have to fight for their little dignity against hard or unjust assumption, or where there is no dignity to respect in the superior. Recognition of service really kills presumption ; those who serve feel instinctively that they are put in their right place. This sense of the extreme value of the service to those whose time and strength are thus set free to care for higher things, begets a consideration and courtesy in dealing with those who are inferiors in the social scale which they highly value, and which draws forth what is best and rebukes what is worst in their hearts. Servants, like the rest of us, have their good side and their bad side. It depends much on the way in which they are treated which side is turned uppermost. The importance of considerate courtesy towards such lies in the fact that it turns their best nature to the sunlight, and gladdens the home, and, in a measure, the world, with its fruits.

One hears much in these days about the difficulty of finding good servants, and the further difficulty, when they are found, of keeping them in their place. That always seems to

me a sad confession about masters. As a rule one may say that if an inferior class fails in its duty, the superior class to which the duty is owed must have failed first. On a large scale bad children mean bad parents, and bad servants bad masters. Understand exactly what I mean. Moral education and moral rule are not like mechanical manufacture, whose results you can calculate with absolute certainty. If a bad child is found in a home, no one has a right to say, with the decision attaching to a mathematical demonstration, that there must be a bad parent to account for it. But if the children of a generation or of a household are, as a rule, selfish, pert, and fractious, it certainly means that the parents have failed in their duty; and if servants, as a rule, are careless, selfish, or insolent, it certainly shows that the graces of wisdom, gentleness, and charity have not been conspicuous in their employers. Those families among my friends who seem to me least troubled by the servant difficulty, in which I meet the same faces year after year, always cheerful and friendly, are certainly the families who most obey the Christian law which I have endeavoured to expound.

Of all current delusions, there is none, I believe, more false and disastrous, than that which teaches that people must always be kept at a distance that they may be kept in their place. I have always found that people are more, and not less, easily managed when they are treated with confidence and frankness. I am not addressing fine ladies, to whom their servants are really of no more account than the dust under their feet, but heads of Christian households, who have some desire to do their duty to their dependents as members of the consecrated human brotherhood, as those who are called to be one with them in the family of the Christian Church. And this means something much more than establishing regular family worship, sending them to the sanctuary on the Lord's day, or even conducting a class for their religious instruction, which things sum up the view of their duty which many excellent heads of Christian households are disposed to entertain. The root of the matter lies deeper than any of these. It is a question of winning their confidence and touching their hearts. It is the pastoral relation which is to be the model here ; the personal care and vigilant anxiety for their

good which will make them feel that they are not treated as mere sentient machines, but that the heads of the household, who take thought and care for the children that they may have their little entertainments and enjoyments to brighten their lives, include the servants in the circle of their sympathies ; and are always on the watch to make them feel that they are an integral part of the home, and that, if they have to work for it and to bear its burden, they are not excluded from a real share in its interests and joys. A thoughtful care to associate the servants with the family festivals will greatly help, and never hinder, the wise and orderly rule of the household. And it will bear higher fruits. The servants will contract the habit of feeling that they are thought of and cared for, that they are not mere instruments of service, but objects of personal interest and sympathy ; and they will know where to turn for a friend, a helper, in those hours of need which never fail to occur in the history of the humblest and least-instructed soul. And so relations of trust and affection will grow, which will enrich and gladden the life of the home, and establish an influence over the head and the heart of the

dependent, which may prove fruitful in blessing not on earth only, but in eternity.

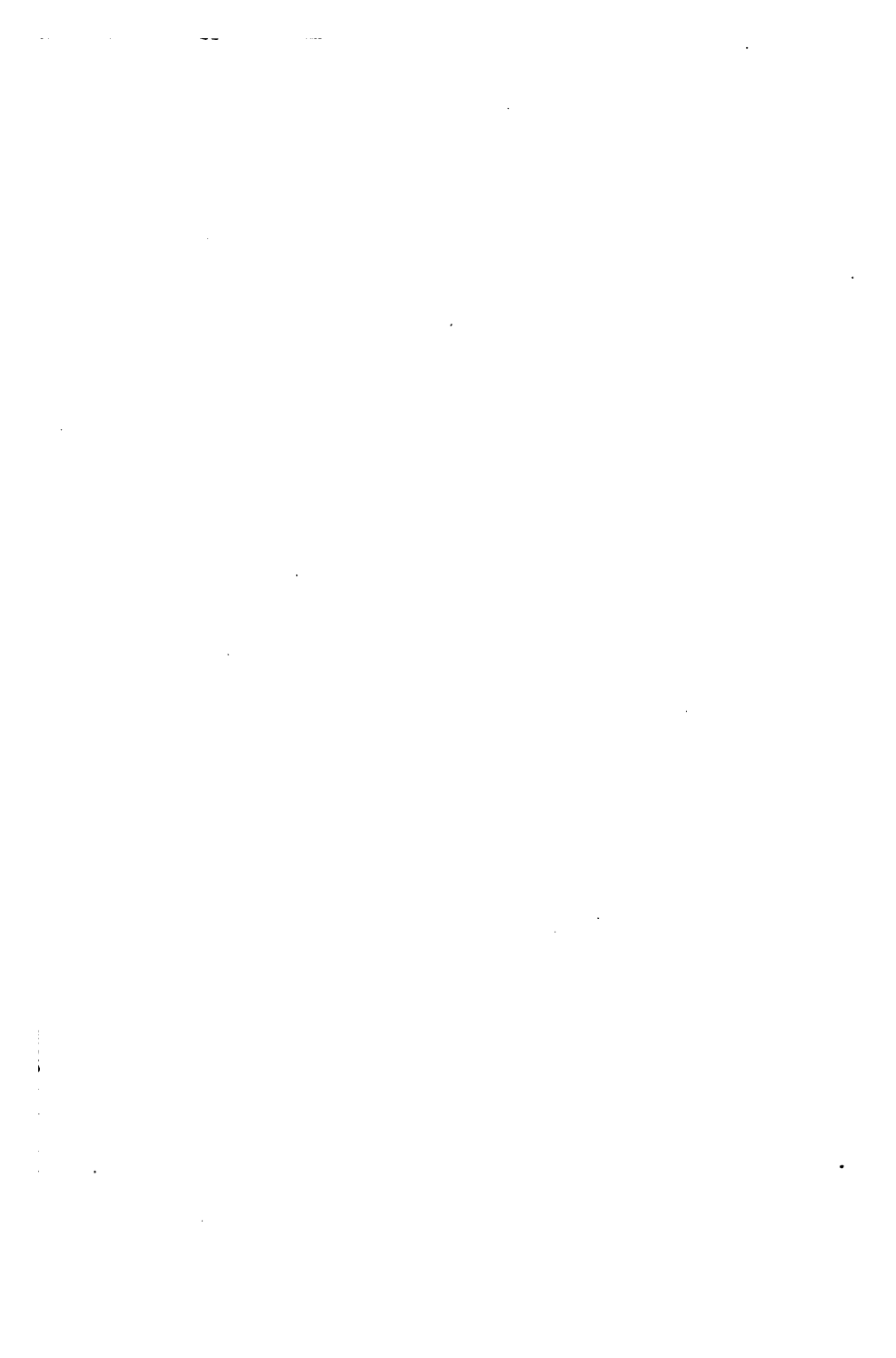
Very important, too, is it that Christian parents should train their children from the first to regard the servants of the house with genial trust and friendliness. Children in this matter quickly catch the tone of their elders. The relation of the children to the servants in the home circle ought to strike the keynote of their relation to their brethren in the humbler classes of society, when they go forth into life. At home they ought to study those lessons of thoughtfulness for the poorer and more ignorant of their fellows, and of loving care for the toiling, struggling masses, which they must take out into life with them and practise nobly, if they are to be fellow-helpers with Christ in the kingdom of God.

And thus the home, in all its holy, blessed, and beautiful relations, in which the reciprocal duties of masters and servants play a not undistinguished and unfruitful part, becomes what God meant it to be—a tender, genial training school for life's noblest duties and holiest activities, which will be the spring of the purest joys, when at length, as must befall, the home

circle is broken up, and the child must go forth to fight the battle and bear the burden of life alone. The training of the Christian home is the noblest culture that the Father's wisdom and tenderness could ordain for "His little ones." It is the image on earth of Divine relations; it is the foreshining of the light and the joy of the Father's kingdom; it is the vestibule of the home where the comrades of earth will gather at last, when the good fight has been fought and the course has been finished, to renew the fellowships which death but suspended for the moment, and to be forever with each other—and with the Lord.

IX.

*THE WORK OF THE HOME FOR THE
WORLD.*



IX.

THE WORK OF THE HOME FOR THE WORLD.

“The whole family.”—EPH. iii. 15.

THE family, as we have seen, is the true human unit. “God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him ; male and female created He them.” From the first, man is dual, and soon the child is born, and the human triad—Man, Wife, Child—appears. The individual man, fully conscious of a self-determining will on whose decisions hang consequences of awful moment which stretch on to eternity, is really the product of a developed civilisation. Man comes at length to realise all that the possession of a human nature, with its dread endowment of freedom, implies ; but in the earlier stages of his development, as far back as we can trace his history, he appears as the member of a community, having a place appointed and duties ordained in relation to that community which occupy his whole thought and

care, and fill up the whole sphere of his conscious responsibility. As far down the stream of history as the palmy days of Greek culture, man had hardly realised that he was more than a citizen, the member of a State which claimed his supreme duty, and which determined for him the bounds of his life. The idea of a duty to an unseen Lord, which might clash with and override duty to the State, was one which the average Greek mind could not take in. The grounds of the penal sentences which the Greek democracy passed upon the philosophers who dared to think and to speak about facts and duties in a sense which the State had not sanctioned, was that such free thought and speech were impious; it was the breach of the one sacred duty by which a man was bound, the duty of harmony with the only superior, the State, with which he had practically anything to do. The invisible Power to which Socrates, for instance, submitted his life, and by which he guided his course, to the Greek mind was nowhere; and to the Greek democracy it argued an utterly perverse and impious mind to talk or think of such an imperative superior at all.

It was not till the Greek States were broken

up by the Macedonian power, and till after the redistribution of peoples and sovereignties which the career of Alexander the Great ushered in, that men began to feel themselves citizens of a larger world than that with which, up to that time, they were conscious that they had intimately to do. In truth, this new Græco-Oriental world seemed to them an over large world, in which they did not exactly know how to find their place, and from which they looked in vain for that guidance about their round of duties, which their own more limited State or city in earlier ages had supplied. It was then only that they began fully to realise their separate individuality, and to feel that, as to their personal action, the decisions of their personal will, on which they could not but see that most momentous issues were hanging, they were utterly and terribly alone. Then philosophy began to occupy itself about those questions of personal conduct, the ground and the law of duty, the relation of the individual man to the system of things around him, and his true defence against the miseries of his lot, which were the staple topics alike of the Epicurean and the Stoic schools ; and which, by raising questions

which they could not answer, in a very remarkable way prepared men's minds to accept the revelations of Christianity.

But everywhere the extrication, so to speak, of the individual man, as a free, conscious being, on whose decisions the most momentous interests were hanging for time and for eternity, was the work of long and painful development. Always we find man at first the undistinguished, undistinguishable atom in an aggregate of similar atoms, be it larger or smaller, be it a village, a tribe, a city, a State; and only by slow degrees he grows into full consciousness of all his responsibilities and duties as a man. We meet with this everywhere in the early history of our race, except among the Jews. The Jews were always full-grown men. "Ye shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation," was God's constitution of the Israelitish nation in the wilderness. From the first each member of the nation, man, woman, and child, was made fully conscious of his relations to the God of heaven, and was placed under the strongest stimulus to duty which heaven itself could supply; while the bond which bound them together and made

them a State, was, as 4,000 years have amply proved, the very strongest that exists in our world. I cannot enlarge upon it, or dwell on its significance, but I pray you to note that thus early in the history of civilisation, the great problem was solved, which human society has been working at everywhere in its own way, with very limited success—how to combine the strongest social bond, that which relates men together in societies, and holds them together as one, with the fullest personal freedom, and the highest and largest development of the individual life. This, if you will think of it, is the problem of civilisation; and God solved it 4,000 years ago in the constitution of the “kingdom of priests and the holy nation,” the Church-State of Israel.

And this leads me to remark as to the ministry of the home to society, that—

I. It is the witness to the true principle of order in all human communities; and,

II. It is a witness to the true principle and method of progress, by which the development of the society may best be promoted, and the great ends of its existence as a society may best be secured.

I. It is the witness to the true principle of order in all human communities.

The essential feature in the order of the home, as we have seen, is that all its members belong to each other, are related by the dearest bonds, and are bound by love as well as by duty to a higher Lord, to care for each other's welfare, to minister to each other's progress, and to bless each other's lives. So with the Christian idea of the State. It is essentially a brotherhood, and out of this relation of brotherhood all the most solemn obligations of citizens spring. And this idea is utterly destructive of the notion of a social contract, as the foundation of civil societies. The idea was popular enough in the generation which preceded the French Revolution—though it was from English philosophers that the Frenchmen learned it—that society has its origin in the agreement of free, independent human individuals to live together in political relations, and to resign something of their natural liberty for the sake of the benefits and advantages which civil society secures. There is nothing corresponding to this social contract in history, nothing even faintly like it, as Aris-

totle saw clearly enough in his day. The free and independent human individual, sufficient to himself, and having natural rights which society can only curtail, nowhere appears. The "noble savage," free as air, and the pattern of all manly virtues, is not known to history. At the same time, this idea of the social state, idle, baseless, and dreamy as it is, was valid and even strong against the pestilent theory of the Divine right of kings to harry their subjects, and of priests to torment them, to which it was opposed, and which it finally put down. But in itself it has no validity; the State grows out of the household, man is in closest relation to his fellow-man from the first.

And States are strong and stable just in the measure in which this relation of brotherhood is recognised and honoured. Paul writes to Philemon, "*I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds: which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me: whom I have sent again: thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own bowels: whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the Gospel: but without*

thy mind would I do nothing ; that thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly. For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever ; not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh and in the Lord ?" (Philemon 10—16). When those words were

recognised as the truth, human society began to be saved. The Jewish State was founded on this relation at the first, but at the time of our Lord the very remembrance of it had perished ; and the sentence, "This people which knoweth not the law is cursed," betrayed the schism in the national household, which had grown out of Pharisaic wealth and pride. Our Lord re-established it on yet deeper, nay, the very deepest, foundations. The Son of Man made every member of the human community His brother, and thus their mutual brotherhood was not only established, but consecrated, with an unction which remains valid through time and eternity. The idea of the brotherhood began to work at once in the national communities in which men were then, and remain still, divided. But, remember, it has a wider universal applica-

tion. The time will come when, as the tribes have been moulded into the nations, the nations will be moulded into the commonwealth of the world ; national patriotism will become human patriotism, and our duty to Zulu and Afghan will be recognised as precisely homogeneous with our duty to the members of the English brotherhood who dwell in the next city ; or, rather, to the members of the one Christian Church. Then only will the teaching of our Lord about patriotism and the patriotic virtues be fully understood.

The Scripture doctrine about slavery, and the history of its practical action, most aptly illustrate the principle which I am laying down. The first attempt to set a limit to the institution—which, remember, is almost inevitable in early states of society as a means of protection to the weak and helpless—was on this principle of brotherhood. “ *And if thy brother that dwelleth by thee be waxen poor, and be sold unto thee ; thou shalt not compel him to serve as a bondservant. But as an hired servant, and a sojourner, he shall be with thee, and shall serve thee unto the year of jubilee : and then shall he depart from thee, both he and his children with him, and shall*

return unto his own family, and unto the possession of his fathers shall he return. For they are My servants, which I brought forth out of the land of Egypt : they shall not be sold as bondmen. Thou shalt not rule over him with rigour ; but shalt fear hy God" (Lev. xxv. 39—43). This introduced a principle before which slavery has gradually and wholesomely withered away. First, the member of the same civil society, which was also a church, was recognised as a brother, and was protected. Then the member of the great Christian family was recognised as a brother, and was taken under the protection of the Christian Church. The Church, through all the mediæval period, strove strenuously to rescue every member of the sacred family, every one for whom Christ died, from bondage, and bore steady and courageous witness that to hold a Christian in bonds was a treason against the Christian's Lord. So slavery, as an institution, withered out of Christendom, and now, by the application of the same principle, it is surely withering out of the world. Now, man, as man, everywhere is recognised as a brother—Negro, Zulu, Coolie—the brotherhood is established ; and precisely because the human race is regarded

as a family, the holding a brother in bondage is stigmatised by the brand of all civilised communities ; and this signs the death-warrant of the system everywhere ultimately through the whole civilised world. "Am I not a man and a brother?" is a phrase which has now become proverbial, and is so familiar as to be constantly parodied, till now it can hardly be used without awakening a smile. But we ought to regard it reverently; it has been the charter of freedom to thousands of millions of our race.

There is one other feature of the family life which I must note, in which it offers a very valuable light to guide the progress of all human societies. It is a paternal system of government, the whole aim of which is to educate men for freedom, and for the intelligent, responsible management of their own affairs. We smile in these days at a paternal system of government. The paternal governments with which we are acquainted are blind, and many of them hateful, despotisms, of which the Pope and the Czar offer the typical instances in their several spheres. But all government in its earlier stages is of necessity paternal. The rule of the

patriarch in his home is its root. The paternal despotisms which distract and torment our times correspond exactly to a household in which, when the sons and daughters are full-grown and fit for freedom, the parents should persist in feeding them with spoon meat and dressing them in long clothes, with the insane idea that they are babies still. Now, a parent who should be guilty of such folly and brutality would be taken in hand by the society to which he belonged, and shut up as insane. It is a thing much to be lamented that there is no tribunal of the "ermine-robed great world," before which the paternal despots could be summoned, and from which they could receive their doom. But you could not find such a tribunal upon earth, though the Vehmgericht and other institutions have endeavoured to supply it; while you could find, alas! paternal despotisms everywhere.

In the family, you will understand, the chief source of interest and joy is the growth of the little ones. Each step on towards manly dignity and womanly honour and grace is watched with delight. The eras in the family life which are celebrated as festivals are the

marked stages of the advance. The grand festival of all is the coming of age of the son. All the culture has respect, and not grudging respect, but hearty, loving, trustful respect, to the future period of independence; the child who seems likely to continue a child is the source of constant care and pain. Most of the troubles which arise in families have their root, in some way, in the parents failing to recognise the advance of their children in the path of development, and their growing fitness to take charge of their own affairs. Those families on the whole are the happiest, the most affectionate, the most prosperous, in which the parents know wisely how to change, by almost imperceptible gradations, their children into friends. When will rulers learn the lesson which the family, the typical social institution upon earth, has to teach them? When will they learn joyfully to associate their subjects with them in the work of government, and to rejoice with a great joy as they come of age, and are ready to assume their true place in bearing the burdens and guiding the progress of the State. Alas! rulers dare not, is the answer. The passions of the democracy are so furious that they would tear

the fabric of the State in pieces if they were admitted, otherwise than most jealously and cautiously, to take any direct part in the government. It would need much time to discuss the question from the historical point of view, but I must briefly express my conviction that the main part of the danger, and, unquestionably, the grave part of the danger, arises from jealousy. The people are maddened by being treated, age after age, like babies when they are full-grown and fit for freedom. They have to conquer their liberties from jealous and selfish tyrannies, and then no wonder they make free with the spoils of war. The life of the family is here, too, the guiding light to lead the progress of societies; and just in the measure in which families are true to the idea of the institution, and make the life of the home what God meant it to be, just in that measure will States be enlightened and sanctified by it, and will stir themselves to make their life a pattern of the life of the Holy City, the new Jerusalem on high.

II. It is a witness to the true principle and method of progress, by which the development of the society may best be promoted, and the

great ends of its existence as a society may best be secured.

In societies, as in families, there are always strong and weak, wise and ignorant, helpful and helpless. In the home the relations of rich and poor are excluded, as there is common maintenance for all; so one day the strongly-marked classes of rich and poor will vanish out of our world. Richer and poorer there will always be, as, indeed, there are in families. In a large family of children you will find the thrifty and the lavish, the helpers and the helped, the guides, teachers, ministers, and the feebler, the more dependent, who are always looking up for sympathy and aid. But bitter, grinding poverty, such as makes men fierce and mad, and savagely jealous and envious of the upper ten thousand, we may hope will one day die, before the advancing principle of human brotherhood, out of our world. But always, for the present, there will be the large class of ignorant, poor, and helpless citizens who are cast upon the care and the thought of the wiser, stronger, and more helpful members of the community. A certain rich diversity of gifts and endowments is, as we have seen, the law of

our nature, whereby a bountiful variety of stations, callings, and conditions is secured. A dead-level monotony nowhere appears to be comprehended in the scheme of Providence, as regards either Nature or man. Rich varieties of endowments, capacities, tendencies, activities, stations, and conditions, are secured, under the present constitution of things at any rate, in the order of the world.

And the problem of society in all ages has been how to help and uplift the poor. The State really is as its poorest are. The chain is no stronger than its weakest link ; the State is no stronger than its poorest class : if they are rising in the scale, the State is strong and prosperous ; if they are sinking in the scale, the State is decaying ; and their decadence, though to the outward eye the society may wear the aspect of proud prosperity, will lay in the end its strength and honour in the dust. The Greek States, composed of a little band of freemen and a great band of slaves, had in them the principle of inevitable decay ; the Roman State, under similar conditions, inevitably broke up and perished. Pliny says that vast farms—cultivated by a great multitude of slaves—ruined

Rome. Channing spent some time in the Southern States of America in his youth, and was greatly struck by the splendid strength and fulness of the social life of the people. "But for their sensuality and their slaves," he says, "I should think it the strongest society in the world." But the sensuality and the slaves have dragged it down ; and it is now, beaten, captive, wasted, despoiled of independence, property, and prestige, among the most wretched communities in the civilised world.

The poor are the chronic difficulty in all civilised communities, and their gravest trial ; and I reckon it a main feature in the hopeful outlook of our times, that the condition of the poor and the most effectual way of helping them, are attracting the attention of the most thoughtful and earnest minds in every country which aims at progress. It is a Christian problem, inasmuch as Christ stated it, and proposed the solution ; had not the benign work of His Gospel been hindered and marred in all ages by the selfishness, the tyranny, and the brutality of mankind, long ere this grinding poverty—that poverty which is a shame to earth and a grief to heaven—would have been

banished from the world. But the Church, by its steady, constant, courageous witness in all ages, has forced this question, 'as the radical social question, on the mind, the heart, and the conscience of society. And now Christian and non-Christian, believer and infidel, are earnestly at work upon it, and all alike understand that the solution of this problem is the salvation of society.

And now let us see what light the order of the home casts upon it. What is the essential feature of the discipline of the home, and of the influence which it exercises on those who are trained in its school? It is distinctly personal; the direct influence of mind on mind, and heart on heart. The members of the home are in personal contact, and though very much indeed hangs on the wise rule of the home by means of what I might call its institutions, the outward and formal regulation of its life, yet the personal element is supreme. It is the life in the long run that tells in the home, and the life alone. In the wide world of political society men are dealt with in the mass, by law and regulation, and but for the Church much of the quickening, elevating, stimulating, and purify-

ing influence which emanates from living goodness, wisdom, and self-devotion would be let slip. The State has no hand of power or love with which it can touch its weaklings and lift them and strengthen them ; or by which it can lay a constraint on its sinners that they may be saved. The State is a home which has quite outgrown the simple apparatus which sufficed once for the conduct of its life. It has vast masses to deal with ; it cannot individualise them and adapt its touch to their personal needs and claims. As far as personal influence is concerned it must let them alone to stand or to fall, to sink or to swim, as they may. And hence, where no higher ministry is at hand to help, the tendency of man to grovel masters him, and the downward path is trodden—as Mr. John Stuart Mill so bitterly bewailed.

But the home-life is the model to which the State-life must conform itself, if it is to save itself from wreck. It must get the wisdom of its wise, the strength of its strong, the goodness of its good, into personal living contact with the ignorant, weak, and sinful ; it must find a hand, as Christ found a hand, to lay hold upon them, and lift them, to set

them on their feet, and help them to stand and walk, as parent helps child, or brother brother, in the home. The question of questions in the regeneration of society, is, how much personal, living tact, that is, warm, vitalising touch, can be laid on the classes which are dragging it down, and which, if no power to lift them and uphold them can be discovered, will in the end lay all its pride, strength, and splendour in the dust. I am very far, indeed, from despising or even speaking a light word of what the State can do, by just laws, wise regulations, and free institutions, to develop the life of the people. The influence of these outward conditions is enormous ; as is the influence of pure air, and sunlight, and moisture, in developing the life of a plant. When you have reared a young plant you seek for it congenial conditions of atmosphere and influence, which may minister to the fair unfolding of its life. But we put our young human plants to grow and bear fruit in dark foul dens, such as you may find within an easy walk of your own commodious and healthy homes ; with an atmosphere around them that it sickens you to breathe for an instant, and a moral atmosphere that blights inevitably with

its hot, blasting breath, every bud of promise that starts in their young hearts. It is in vain that the hand of Christian love clasps them and strives to lift them into human dignity and grace, while by the dens in which we compel them to live, the lairs in which we compel them to lie, the reeking atmosphere which we compel them to breathe, the dirt in which we compel them to wallow, we crush them down again to the level and the likeness of the beast.

Bend your strength in securing decent outward conditions of living to the poor ; good air, good food, good water, good dwellings, good knowledge, and all that can minister to their culture and progress ; but remember that there is one thing which is yet more essential to their elevation, their extrication from the slough in which they are sinking, and their establishment on a foundation on which they can stand firmly, and begin to build up their lives after a fairer and nobler plan than is now possible to them ; and that is, the direct, personal, loving influence of superior wisdom, superior strength, superior goodness, superior mental and spiritual vitality. It is the personal mixing with them of Christian men and women charged with Christ's wisdom,

strength, and charity, or of men and women who have learnt the lesson of ministry from Christ, whether they call themselves Christian or no, that will begin the work of their rescue, their restoration, their salvation, and will then work through them the salvation of society. The apostles failed once utterly to help a poor, prostrate, devil-tormented child, who was cast foaming at their feet. They exhausted upon him all their arts and efforts in vain. Jesus came down from the Mount of Transfiguration, full charged with the energy of the Heavenly life. He took him by the hand, lifted him up, and he arose. It is the only method. The wise regulation of the life of a community by law, is a matter of the vastest importance. Unless that is cared for, and healthy conditions of life are established, you may take the poor by the hand, and lift them, in vain ; they will inevitably fall back again, and their latter end will be worse than their first.

It is the application of the fundamental principle of the order of the home to the State which alone can save it ; and I reckon it the crowning glory of our age, and the most hopeful feature of its life, that the care of the poor is becoming a personal question to the large band of intelligent,

cultivated, and self-devoted labourers who are now about in our courts and our alleys, our slums and our lairs, searching out the causes of poverty, degradation, and misery, and applying to the cure the vital energy of superior wisdom, strength, goodness, health, and life. The paternal principle of government is being restored, not in a person or in an institution, but in the collective wisdom and virtue of the community; which, by the hand of voluntary, self-denying, self-devoted ministers is fulfilling the parent's office, and making the State something like a home for all classes of citizens once more. The households of the land will become in the end the nurseries for the larger home of the great brotherhood, the State; while the State itself shall become the nursery of the great home of the universal brotherhood, "the general assembly and Church of the first-born" on high. There the one King of men, who can rule without dwarfing and degrading them, is exalted to the throne, and sways the sceptre of righteousness with the hand of love over the commonwealth of a redeemed humanity; and under His rule "the kingdom of priests and the holy nation" is re-constituted for eternity.

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